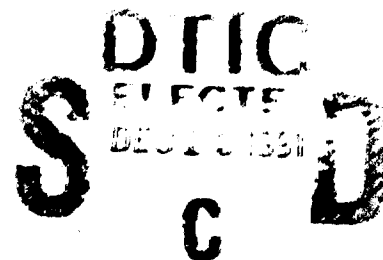


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THE FUTURE ROLE OF
THE COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM



A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

MICHAEL DUANE WELTSCH, MAJOR, USMC
B.S., UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY, ANNAPOLIS MARYLAND, 1976

FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS
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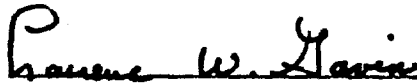
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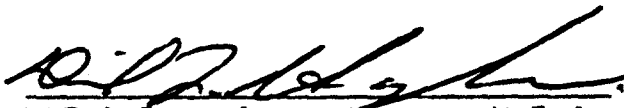
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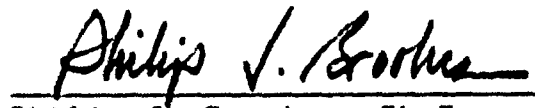
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ABSTRACT

THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM By Major Michael Duane Weltsch, USMC, 171 pages.

This study investigates the role of the Combined Action Program (CAP) as a future counterinsurgency tactic against a Maoist-style rural insurgency. This study identifies the tenets of a Maoist style insurgency, and the benefits derived from mass support. It then narrates a history of CAP and identifies its strengths and weaknesses. This study then analyzes CAP's ability to reduce the benefits of mass support received by the insurgent. Finally, this study makes recommendations for the future employment of CAP.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to determine if the Combined Action Program (CAP) is a viable tactic for future counterinsurgency operations. Before discussing CAP, the thesis will discuss conditions that are necessary for successful counterinsurgency operations and examine insurgency doctrine to establish a common base. The conditions the thesis will discuss are based on research and fall into two related, but not totally overlapping categories: the political conditions and the military conditions necessary for successful counterinsurgency operations.

After discussing the political and military conditions, the thesis will examine insurgency doctrine. The thesis will use the doctrine of Mao Tse Tung. While Mao did not invent revolutionary guerrilla warfare, he was

the first to sufficiently chronicle his efforts. Since Mao published his writings on revolutionary guerrilla warfare, others such as Vo Nguyen Giap and Che Guevara have followed suit. However, Mao remains the standard by which all others are measured.

After the discussion of Maoist Doctrine, the thesis will present a brief background of CAP to give the reader a basic understanding of its history and intent.

The Political Nature of Insurgency

The United States is a world power with global interests and responsibilities. Included in its national interests are the maintenance of strong alliances and the promotion of democratic values. Either of these can be threatened by insurgencies, in which a faction, or coalition of factions, attempts to overthrow an established government and usurps power.

The prototype for modern rural insurgencies is the Communist Revolution in China. It has been the model for subsequent insurgencies from Vietnam to Peru. While all insurgencies vary to some degree, all were based principally on the Chinese example. Fundamental to this

type of insurgency is the concept of a 'people's war'. This means the insurgent cannot survive without the logistical, tactical, intelligence, and personnel support it receives by controlling the people. Logically, then, any counterinsurgency doctrine that does not address this concept is doomed to failures such as the American experience in Vietnam.

A 'people's war' is a revolution built from the ground up. As such, certain conditions must exist before a revolution can take hold and grow. Ernesto 'Che' Guevara wrote, '... the guerrilla is a crusader for the people's freedom, (who) after exhausting peaceful means, resorts to armed rebellion.'¹ The corollary to this idea is: If a government meets the needs of the people and allows access to reform by peaceful means, there is no need for armed rebellion. A second corollary then is: 'A potential revolutionary situation exists in any country where the government consistently fails in its obligation to ensure at least a minimally decent standard of life for the great majority of its citizens.'²

Perhaps the most misunderstood concept in revolutionary guerrilla warfare is the political nature of the warfare. Revolutionary guerrilla warfare is the same

as conventional warfare, where war should merely be an extension of national policy. Because many fail to understand this most basic fact, they tend to look at revolutionary warfare as strictly a military phenomenon, and choose to disregard the political aspects of the war. One who does this does so at his own peril, and merely treats the symptoms of repression, rather than the cause. The importance of this fact was not lost on Mao Tse Tung. Mao recognized the need for the military arm of the revolution to be subordinate to, and thus supportive of, the political arm. He chastised those who did not understand when he wrote:

There are some militarists who say, 'We are not interested in politics, but only in the profession of arms.' It is vital that these simple-minded militarists be made to realize the relationship between politics and military affairs. Military action is a method used to attain a political goal. While military affairs and political affairs are not identical, it is impossible to isolate one from the other. 3

Unfortunately , this key factor is one that American policy makers have failed to realize in their decision making over the last forty years. In that time the United States has repeatedly supported corrupt, but amenable dictators, in an effort to maintain a military advantage. As a result the United States has become 'The Great Satan' to many underdeveloped countries.

Political Framework

Three political conditions compose the framework necessary for American participation in counterinsurgency operations. These conditions are necessary because they are in keeping with American values and are required to gain and maintain the support of the American people. The first condition is the willingness of the host government to address the legitimate grievances of its people. The second condition is that U.S. aid is tied to political reform. The third condition is the formulation of a grand strategy that uses all elements of national power to develop a stable, responsive, humane government.

Addressing Grievances

The first condition that must exist before the United States commits itself to support a foreign government against an insurgent is the willingness of that government to address the legitimate grievances of the people. Caution must be exercised here to ensure the agreed upon reform is genuine. While many of the regimes the United States has supported in the past pledged their willingness to reform they, in fact, made no effort to do so. It would be a grievous error in policy to allow this

to happen again. Therefore, any aid the United States gives to another country must be in conjunction with a detailed plan for reform that sets readily identifiable goals and objectives that are measurable and set to a non-negotiable, but flexible time table. In this context, I use the term non-negotiable to mean the end state is not negotiable; and flexible to mean the time table must allow for setbacks, execution problems, etc.

Without reform the host nation government will never enjoy wholehearted mass support. As Victor Corpus wrote in Silent War: 'Only a bold and determined action by the government, such as honest to goodness land reform, for instance, can prevent the desperate and starving people from rushing into the arms of the rebels.' 4 Thus, any government seeking assistance from the United States must either already include procedures that allow peaceful reform or be willing to change to do so.

Aid and Reform

The second condition that must exist before any commitment of American resources is a mutual understanding between the government of the host nation and the United States that American assistance is tied to the United

States' policy on human rights and promotion of democratic values. Without a host government committed to the protection of human rights and the development of democratic institutions, the United States and the host government will lose the support of the American people. Without the support of the American people the United States cannot maintain the long term support necessary to thwart an insurgency.

Without such a commitment by both the United States and the host government, the insurgent will exploit the situation within the host nation with propaganda in an effort to sway both internal and external public opinion against the counter insurgency effort. History has proven both of these are critical to the prolonged counterinsurgency struggle.

Internally, the insurgent will attempt to portray the host nation's army and government as stooges of the 'American oppressor'. The role of oppressor is one the United States must be extremely leery of, because it is one that will inevitably be brought up by the insurgent and has historically proven very profitable. Mao used it extensively to galvanize the Chinese people against the Japanese and later against Chiang Kai-Shek (American

puppet) . Ho Chi Minh used it against the Japanese, French, and Americans. It remains a proven means to rally uncommitted and moderate people to the insurgent's cause.

Externally, the insurgent will attempt to portray himself as the victim of colonialism that, if left unchecked, will threaten other underdeveloped countries. The insurgent hopes to control American and world public opinion and thus erode American support. The fact that the insurgent is held to a different standard makes no difference. The United States cannot allow itself or its ally to sink to the insurgent's level in regards to democratic principles and human rights. It is absolutely imperative that, 'Every means should be employed to convince such people of the altruistic intention of our government.' 5

Grand Strategy

The third condition that must be met before the United States commits to support another government in counterinsurgency operations is the existence of a well planned grand strategy by the host nation that uses all elements of national power; sets well defined, obtainable objectives; integrates host nation reform with economic and

political development; and is in concert with the interests of both the host nation and the United States. Current United States' counterinsurgency doctrine terms this a Counterinsurgency (COIN) Plan. While the discussion of this doctrine is complex and beyond the scope of this thesis, it is necessary to identify the need for such a plan. Even though any such strategy would have to use a combination of the elements of power, direct military intervention by American forces should be considered only as a last resort and only if the vital interests of the United States, which includes the safety of American citizens, are threatened.

Military Conditions

There are four distinct military conditions necessary before the United States commits troops in support of another government. The first condition is a military strategy that is fully integrated with the grand strategy. The second condition is a policy that does not result in 'de facto' escalation. The third condition is that U.S. forces are introduced to support, not replace the host nations forces. The fourth condition is an agreement that defines the conditions under which the U.S. would withdraw its forces.

Military Strategy

Similar to the necessity for a realistic grand strategy; a realistic, pragmatic military strategy must be developed that compliments the grand strategy. Extreme caution must be used to ensure that Mao's warning that military and political affairs cannot be isolated from each other, does not go unheeded. The Marines who fought in the 'Banana Wars' in Latin America in the 1920's and 30's acknowledged this as they developed their doctrine for 'Small Wars' when they wrote, 'The military strategy of small wars is more directly associated with the political strategy of the campaign than it is in the case of major operations.' 6

[De Facto] Escalation

The second condition is that introduction of American military forces of any type should not result in a de facto escalation of hostilities. The developed strategy must fit the situation and must contain no element that detracts from the noble concepts of human rights and promotion of democratic reform that should be synonymous with U.S. intervention. In other words:

The campaign plan and strategy must be adapted to the character of the people encountered. National policy and the precepts of civilized procedure demand that our dealing with other peoples be maintained on a high moral plan (sic). 7

This condition must be present for two reasons. First, such an action would not be in keeping with the aforementioned need to maintain the moral high ground and would adversely effect world and American public opinion. Second, unnecessary violence may alienate otherwise supportive people and nations. Since it can be assumed that if United States troops were introduced, their mission would be to help save a country and not destroy it, then the level of violence should be commensurate with the threat. Otherwise, the United States risks alienating the very people it came to assist. The history of revolutionary warfare is full of examples of how heavy-handed government counterinsurgency tactics drove otherwise loyal or neutral citizens into the insurgents camp. The classic example in American history was the British Carolina campaigns. In these, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton's abuses provoked many previously loyal, and noncommitted, Carolinians to support the revolution. 8

Once heavy-handed tactics have been used and the people alienated, it is unlikely that they can be won back. In his book, Village at War, James Trullinger Jr.

gave an example of how, in Vietnam, the United States' failure to understand this rendered later U.S. civic action efforts impotent. Trullinger wrote of his interview with a Vietnamese peasant shortly after the completion of a new civic action program. When Trullinger asked the peasant what he thought about Americans now that they have just completed a much needed civic action project, the peasant replies, 'How can I remember anything good about the Americans when they did so much bad.' 9

In attempting to limit the degree of violence, it must be remembered that there are two types: the first is deliberate damage that results from premeditated actions such as attacking an enemy position, and the second is we Americans have come to term 'collateral damage'. To ensure that a situation does not escalate de facto, both types must be considered in the conduct of the campaign. The need to limit the level of violence in counterinsurgency operations must permeate the policy of the United States and the host government. This consideration should affect the training required; the scale of the operations used; and, perhaps most importantly, the attitude of the American servicemen and host nation troops toward the local populace.

Training for counterinsurgency operations differs from training for conventional warfare, in that the individual soldier must not only possess all the requisite soldierly skills, but also the self discipline to conduct himself in such a way that fosters the attainment of the desired political objectives. While simply stated; this is no small task. For example, it may involve not returning fire at a sniper, because of uncertainty as to the snipers exact location. As the Small Wars Manual points out, "The aim is not to develop a belligerent spirit in our men but rather one of caution and steadiness." 10

The scale of operations and type of tactics used must also be carefully considered in light of how they affect the people. Large scale search and destroy operations may have an adverse effect on the overall counterinsurgency effort. While it is necessary to destroy the insurgents ability to wage war, large scale operations have the side effect of dehumanizing the populace. This can lead to a widespread acceptance of 'collateral damage' due to excessive use of military force and even foster maltreatment of the populace as an unavoidable consequence of war. In the worst case, this dehumanizing can result in a general feeling that the lives and property of the citizens of the host nation are somehow less valuable than

those of Americans. It is this type of dehumanizing that permits atrocities. As Neil Sheehan pointed out in A Bright Shining Lie, a command acceptance of wholesale 'collateral damage' can be twisted into justification for otherwise unthinkable results:

What Calley and the others who participated in the massacre did that was different was to kill hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese in two hamlets in a single morning and to kill point-blank with rifles, pistols, and machineguns. Had they killed just as many over a larger area in a longer period of time and killed impersonally with bombs, shells, rockets, white phosphorus, and napalm, they would have been following the normal pattern of American military conduct. 11

While training and rules of engagement can prepare the individual to a limited degree, they are useless without the proper attitude. As illustrated above, that attitude is developed by the leadership through what conduct is expected and accepted from the individual. While rigid standards of conduct should be established and enforced, the attitude of the individual is of paramount importance in implementing the intent of the higher authority. Again, while easily stated, this is no small task and must be continuously emphasized. Thus, 'In major warfare, hatred of the enemy is developed among troops to arouse courage. In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with the mass of the population.' 12

Support, Not Replace

The third condition that must be present upon the introduction of American forces is a realization by the leadership of both countries that the role of the American troops is one of support, not one of replacement. The strategy developed must be one that has designed safeguards that prevents the Americans from pushing the host nation forces aside, and taking over the host nation's fight. Without this condition, the United States risks unplanned increases in its level of involvement that might not be in concert with its political objectives.

Withdrawal Criteria

The fourth condition that must be present prior to the introduction of American forces is an agreement between the United States and the host nation as to what defines success. This is necessary to outline the conditions under which the United States would withdraw its forces. At the same time, an agreement must be reached that outlines the circumstances under which the United States would unilaterally withdraw its support due to the host nation's failure to comply with agreements regarding political reform. While these concepts may appear obvious, they are

necessary to limit American involvement. By now America's experience in such matters should have taught American leadership that to keep themselves in power, the leaders of most nations will let Americans die. In effect, this condition gives the American planners a goal to strive for, and puts a stop to the antiquated policy of giving dictators 'Carte Blanche' support. As Sir Robert Thompson wrote, 'The point here is that where a strategic national interest dictates an intervention policy it should also impose a limitation on the cost.' 13

Maoist Doctrine

This thesis will discuss three of the elements of Maoist doctrine. The first is Mao's concept of the need for a long term plan and protracted war. The second will be the components of revolutionary guerrilla warfare. The third area will be a comparison of the relative vulnerabilities of the components.

Mao developed his theories on revolutionary guerrilla warfare partly on Chinese history and the writings of earlier revolutionary leaders such as, Lenin and Marx, but relied mainly on his own experiences in China in the 1920's and 30's. During that time he saw

revolutions start and fail. He witnessed his own revolutionary fortunes ebb and flow. These factors contributed to his conclusion that a war of insurgency:

... has its own specific circumstances and nature, in addition to the circumstances and nature of war in general. Therefore besides the general laws of war, it has specific laws of its own. Unless you understand its specific laws, you will not be able to direct a revolutionary war and wage it successfully. 14

The Vision

The first characteristic of Maoist revolutionary warfare that must be understood, because it is the basis for all subsequent actions, is that revolutionary warfare is a deliberate, methodical event that begins with a vision of a desired end state and works steadily towards that goal. As discussed earlier, the end state is normally the overthrow of the existing government and the seizure of power by the insurgent. Of the need for a plan Mao wrote:

It is absolutely essential to have a long term plan which has been thought out in its general outline and which covers the entire stage or even several strategic stages. 15

This plan is the method the insurgent will use to change the insurgent's position from one of military and

political inferiority to one of military and political dominance. This is a significant task since, unless supported by outside troops, the rebel almost always starts from a zero level of military and political power. Mao described the process as:

A revolution or revolutionary war in its emergence and growth from a small force to a big force, from the absence of political power to the seizure of political power, from the absence of a Red Army to the creation of a Red Army, and from the absence of any revolutionary base areas to their establishment, must be on the offensive and cannot be conservative. 16

Maoist doctrine is based on the realization that in the initial stages of the insurgency, the insurgent will lack the military power necessary to defeat the government army. In order to defeat the government army and usurp power, Mao calls for a 'protracted war'. In military terms, a 'protracted war' can be described as fighting a holding action on the military front by adopting guerrilla warfare, while fighting the main effort on the political front by mobilizing the population behind the insurgent. Only by mobilizing the population behind himself, and winning the support of the people, is the insurgent able to fight a 'protracted war'. Only by fighting a 'protracted war' can the insurgent increase his military and political power while simultaneously eroding that of the government to overcome his initial inferiority and win.

'Protracted war' is an all out assault on the infrastructure of a country. In a 'protracted war' insurgent forces assault the government on the political and military fronts simultaneously and continuously. On the military front, the insurgent adopts guerrilla warfare in order to gradually erode the government's military strength while increasing his own. On the political front, the insurgent mobilizes the populace against the government by exploiting legitimate grievances, propagandizing government failures, and intimidating with clandestine operations. The ultimate goal of the insurgent is to turn the people against the government, so that the insurgent can militarily defeat the government forces and usurp power.

Components of Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare

Mao contends that insurgency is based on three components: the Party, the Army, and the United Front. Each of the three components plays an essential role in the insurgency, and contributes to its overall success. The three components are meshed into a mutually supporting relationship to form a irresistible force that is able to weather the assaults made upon it by the government, while continuously gaining momentum.

The Party

The Party is the political arm of the revolution. As the political arm, it is the command element that guides the revolution. As the command element, the Party coordinates the political and military efforts of the revolution, ensuring the military arm is subordinate to and supportive of political decisions. Mao recognized this when he wrote, '...military affairs are only one means of accomplishing political tasks.' 17

A Maoist style insurgency is built from the bottom up. The most important means of building political power then is by establishing 'base areas'. Base areas are regions politically controlled by the insurgent from which the insurgent can draw support for the insurgency. The base area is the fundamental unit of Maoist doctrine. It is from these areas that '...volunteers are trained and indoctrinated.' and '...agitators and propagandists set forth.' 18

Mao summarized the significance of base areas when he wrote:

A base area may be defined as an area strategically located, in which the guerrilla can carry out their duties of training, self preservation, and development. Ability to fight a war without a rear area is a fundamental characteristic of guerrilla action, but this does not mean that the guerrilla can exist and function over a long period of time without the development of base areas. 19

The establishment of the base area then becomes the intermediate goal of the insurgent and is a precursor to the establishment of a military component, which will be developed after the base area is secured. The insurgents strategy is a variation of the 'oil drop' theory. The plan is to gradually expand political control through a series of campaigns. Mao summarized the cycle of expansion as:

The policy of establishing base areas, of systematically setting up political power; of deepening the agrarian revolution; of expanding the people's armed forces by a comprehensive process of building up first the township Red Guards, then the local Red Army troops, all the way to the regular Red Army troops, of spreading political power by advancing in a series of waves, etc,etc. 20

The insurgent amasses political power by taking advantage of a remote, corrupt, and unresponsive national government. The insurgent replaces the previous government with one that meets the peoples needs, or at a minimum is

preferable to the one it replaced. The insurgent's objective is to isolate and discredit the national government and to provide the people with an alternative government at the local level. On the grand scale this approach becomes successful when, as in Vietnam:

With the rural population under the control of the party, the Government in Siagon would thus become essentially the Government of Siagon alone, and thus irrelevant to the great majority of the South Vietnamese people. 21

Once he has established political control, the insurgent then conducts simultaneous operations to consolidate his gains; to expand his control by further encroachment on government controlled areas; and to reap the benefits of political control, which include increased military potential and mass support. According to Mao, the establishment of political power as a deliberate, planned cycle, cannot be over emphasized. The cycle for the establishment of political power, while designed to be flexible and adaptable, generally fits into a pattern. The most significant changes in the pattern are a result of the degree of difficulty encountered in implementation. Otherwise the pattern used closely resembles the one described by William Andrews in his book, The Village War:

The generalized model is presented as a sequence of four successive phases: clandestine penetration of the village; the psychological conditioning of the inhabitants; expansion of party control; and, finally, the consolidation of party social and political gains. 22

Clandestine penetration of the village is conducted by a cadre of political and propaganda teams, whose mission is to exploit dissatisfaction in the village. Inside the village the teams initially target the legitimate or traditional infrastructure for destruction. They accomplish this through a number of ways, to include the formation and use of seemingly innocent political, social, and fraternal groups upon which they will later rely for political power. The teams also use covert actions, including terrorism and assassination. Eventually, the insurgent will use a combination of overt pressure from the politically controlled groups and covert intimidation resulting from the threat of violence, to further strengthen his position and weaken the government's. The insurgent is successful when the insurgent led shadow government, although maybe still underground, receives recognition from the people as the actual ruling body.

Once the people are conditioned to accept the shadow government as the ruling body, the insurgent continues to expand and consolidate his control, until it becomes natural for the people to support the insurgent. The insurgent does this by filling the void created by the destruction of the previous ruling body. An example of this was in the village of Dinh Tuong, South Vietnam where:

The party fitted itself into the Dinh Tuong village in such a way that the result was a symbiotic, rather than a parasitic relationship. The village became the source of support for the Party's revolutions, and for the village, the Dang Lao Dong furnished leadership and organization. 23

This molding of the people and the party is the preferred method of establishing base areas. The insurgent will, however, resort to terror to accomplish his goal. This terror may be camouflaged as justice by trying uncooperative villagers at a 'People's Court', but the fact that the insurgent will resort to terror to establish and maintain the base areas, is indicative of his importance to the party.

The Army

The military component of Maoist doctrine is based on coordinated conventional and unconventional operations designed to obtain a political objective. Throughout his writing Mao emphasizes that:

The concept that guerrilla warfare is an end in itself and that guerrilla activities can be divorced from those of the regular forces is incorrect. 24

Mao saw guerrilla warfare as an interim and supporting tactic to be used until the insurgent army had grown sufficiently to defeat the government army.

The military component of Maoist doctrine has three sub-components; the regular army (Red Army); the regional guerrilla forces; and the home militia (Red Guard). Each of these three has a unique mission, as well as, missions that overlap and complement the other two. All three of the sub-components play a key role in the overall grand strategy.

Of the three sub-components, Mao believed the regular army to be the most important. He explained its importance when he wrote:

...if we view the war as a whole, there can be no doubt that our regular forces are of primary importance, because it is they who are alone capable of producing the decision." 25

Mao considered the regular army most important because only through it could the insurgent eventually defeat the government army and usurp power. This is a reflection of the traditionalist Marxist view that "...the army is the chief component of state power." 26 In admitting this, Mao was admitting that the 'defeat mechanism' for the government was, the destruction of the government army.

Mao also defined the 'defeat mechanism' of the insurgency as: 'Only the total destruction of the Red Army would constitute complete defeat in a civil war.' 27 Under this line of reasoning, the survival of the regular army becomes a goal within itself. To ensure its survival, the regular army adopts guerrilla warfare and avoids decisive engagement until it can amass sufficient combat strength to defeat the government army. This is critical in the early stages of the war when the insurgents military power is weakest. Mao wrote that when the regular insurgent army was inferior, 'We should strike only when the enemy's situation, the terrain and popular support are all in our favour and not his and we are positively certain of winning.' 28

Once the regular army has developed sufficient combat power to overtly challenge the government army, it may abandon guerrilla warfare in favor of 'mobile' or even conventional warfare. However, the primary mission of the regular army is to defeat the government army, thus clearing the way for final victory.

Regional Guerrillas

In Maoist doctrine, the ultimate objective of the local guerrilla forces is deny the government the ability to mass its superior combat power by forcing it to defend everywhere at the same time. Local guerrilla units can vary from platoon to regimental size forces. Their military missions include:

To exterminate small forces of the enemy, to harass and weaken large forces; to attack enemy lines of communications; to establish base areas capable of supporting independent operations in the enemy's rear; to force the enemy to disperse his strength and to coordinate all these activities with those of the regular armies on distant battle fronts. 29

Mao further defines the local guerrilla's responsibilities when operating in the vicinity of the regular army:

Guerrilla forces in the immediate battle area are responsible for close coordination with regular forces. Their principal functions are to hinder enemy transport, to gather information, and to act as outposts and sentinels. 30

In addition to the missions above, local guerrilla forces also help consolidate the control of base areas; are a pool of trained replacements for the regular army; assist in training the local militias; provide a screen for the regular army; and incite and control the people.

Local Militias

The local militia, or 'Red Guard', is the third sub-component of the military arm of Maoist doctrine. 'Their function is to protect the revolution.' 31 To do this they act in concert with the local political organization to ensure the political gains made are not reversed. Among their many duties are:

- Controlling the people in the 'liberated areas' by 'arresting' and trying traitors.
- Securing information and procuring arms.
- Conducting low level political indoctrination and military training.
- Providing logistical support for themselves and assisting the local guerrilla forces in procuring supplies.
- Inculcating the people and keeping order in the rear.
- Replenishing the ranks of the regular army and the regional guerrilla forces.
- Providing medical support and hideouts for the local guerrillas.
- Serving as sentinels and lookouts for the local guerrillas.
- Preventing enemy propaganda from taking hold. 32

Mao summarized his concept of the function of the military component of revolutionary guerrilla warfare when he compared the government to a giant and the guerrillas '...to innumerable gnats, which, by biting a giant both in front and in rear, ultimately exhaust him.' 33

The United Front

The third leg of Mao's triad is the United Front. The United Front refers to the grass roots, popular support of the insurgency. It is not merely the disenfranchised and the outcasts that make up the United Front. Rather, the United Front crosses all economic, class, and social lines, to give the insurgent broad base of mass support. Revolutionary leader, Vladimir I. Lenin defined the United Front as: "...an association of organizations dedicated to some single objective and open to all groups willing to embrace that objective...." 34

Mass Support

If the party is the command element and the army is the defeat mechanism, then mass support is the guts of the revolution. Mass support is the source of strength for the insurgency. Its importance to the success of the insurgency cannot be overstated. Mao repeatedly emphasized the critical nature of mass support to the revolution. Some examples of this are:

The moment that this war of resistance dissociates itself from the masses of the people is the precise moment that it dissociates itself from hope of ultimate victory. Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation. 35

The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people.

Thus the key factor to winning victory in guerrilla war, which is winning of mass support, is not given rightful attention or priority. 36

As can be seen by these relatively few quotes, Mao understood the direct relationship between the survival of the revolution and mass support. He understood that by properly exploiting the benefits of mass support, the insurgent could negate his political and military inferiority. Mass support provides the insurgent personnel, intelligence, tactical, and logistical support necessary to survive and flourish.

Personnel Benefits of Mass Support

Mass support provides the insurgent soldiers to fill the ranks of the various military and paramilitary organizations of the revolutionary military component. As Mao wrote, "Without question, the fountainhead of guerrilla warfare is in the masses of people who organize guerrilla

units directly from themselves.' 37 The insurgent who possesses mass support possesses the ability to replace his losses and to form new units. This enables the insurgent to not only maintain his military strength, but to also increase it. As with any army, growth of the insurgent army to grow is a fundamental requirement of success. If mass support is weak, the guerrilla will suffer the same fate of any army with low morale - recruitment problems and a high desertion rate. Without a constant source of personnel the insurgent army will eventually disintegrate.

Intelligence Benefits of Mass Support

Guerrilla warfare is a complicated, multi-faceted endeavor adopted by the militarily inferior insurgent to erode the government's initial military superiority, while gradually increasing the strength of the insurgent army. As such an endeavor, guerrilla warfare has many critical components that must be coordinated correctly or risk devastating consequences to the entire insurgency. None of these components is more important than accurate, timely intelligence. As Brigadier General Griffith summarized, 'Intelligence is the decisive factor in planning guerrilla operations.' 38

Intelligence is the guerrilla's key to successful military operations. Because the guerrilla is militarily inferior, the guerrilla must retain the initiative and only accept battle on favorable terms. Mass support provides the guerrilla this ability, because the best source of intelligence is the people. If the guerrilla has the support of the people, the guerrilla has the means to determine government troop dispositions and strengths; to track government troop movements, and to anticipate government intentions and operations. Once this state is reached, the guerrilla is able to force the government to accept battle on the guerrilla's terms. Government attempts to recapture the initiative often result in ill-conceived, futile operations developed without sufficient intelligence that further compound the problems associated with lack of the initiative.

A second, but equally important, advantage of mass support is the screen it provides the guerrilla. Through his use of the population the guerrilla denies the government knowledge of his locations, movements, and intentions. Mac wrote that "...the people are better at blocking the passage of information..." and that mass support is critical in achieving surprise. 39 Griffith

likened this situation to one of a man (the government) on a lighted stage trying to fight an opponent (the guerrilla) in the surrounding darkness.

The enemy stands on a lighted stage, from the darkness around him, thousands of unseen eyes intently study his every move, his every gesture. When he strikes out, he hits air; his antagonists are insubstantial, as intangible as fleeting shadows in the moonlight. 40

The third aspect of intelligence necessary for the guerrilla to survive is a superior knowledge of the terrain. Here again the guerrilla must make up for his lack of military power by achieving local military superiority. On the offense, a guerrilla who has an intimate knowledge of terrain, is able to move undetected, mass quickly, strike suddenly, and disappear before the government has a chance to react. On the defense, superior knowledge of the terrain, allows the guerrilla to move rapidly and secretly to avoid encirclement and destruction or to choose the place of battle that best supports his defense.

The combination of a superior intelligence gathering ability, a superior knowledge of terrain, and an intelligence denial ability is critical to the survival and

growth of the guerrilla forces. The guerrilla's ability to obtain these advantages is directly related to the degree of mass support received from the people.

Operational Benefits of Mass Support

Mass support allows the guerrilla to blend into local populace and survive. The operational effect of this is the ability of the guerrilla to conduct the unconventional warfare operations in the government's rear in support of the overall war effort. The guerrilla uses these operations to complicate the government's counterinsurgency efforts by increasing the amount of friction encountered. Unconventional operations in the government's rear render even the most simple undertaking, such as administrative troop movements, a major tactical event. These operations slow government reaction time, frustrate government troops, and essentially rob the government of aggressiveness. The ultimate objective of the guerrilla is to create among the government troops a fear for their own safety and an aura of invincibility for the guerrilla. If successful, this fear will result in the government troops ceasing or curtailing their offensive

operations, and restricting themselves, "... to a few strongholds, that is, to the big cities and along the main communications lines...thus threatening his existence and shaking his morale...". 41

The intent is to make the government soldier so concerned over his own survival, which he believes to be in constant danger, that he is unable to think past his own immediate safety. Of this Che wrote, " To put the enemy in such a state of mind, the guerrilla must have absolute cooperation from the people living in the area and an intimate knowledge of terrain." 42

Logistical Benefits of Mass Support

Some believe the adage, "An army moves on its stomach," does not apply to guerrilla warfare. However, in guerrilla warfare, as in conventional warfare, logistical support is critical. Guerrilla warfare differs from conventional warfare not in the need for that support, but in the source of that support. A conventional army has a logistical tail that follows it. In guerrilla warfare, where allegedly there is no rear, the guerrilla relies on two main sources for logistical support: the enemy and the people.

Unless supplied by outside sources, the enemy is the guerrilla's primary source of weapons, ammunition, and other hardware the guerrilla uses to fight that he is unable to manufacture. Mass support provides all else. This includes: food, clothing, medical support, transportation, labor, etc. 43 In Vietnam the Viet Cong taxed the peasant a portion of his rice crop to help feed the insurgent armies. These examples are important because they illustrate that the guerrilla is not a phantom, but must rely on logistical support to survive. This support is sourced from the base areas and the people who inhabit them. If denied access to his logistical base, the guerrilla, like any other military organization, would either have to develop an alternative source or cease to function.

In summarizing the overall value of mass support to the insurgency, Mao compared the guerrilla to a fish and mass support to the pond in which the fish lived. According to Mao, the smaller and shallower the pond (mass support) the easier it would be for the fisherman (government) to locate and trap the fish (guerrilla). However, the larger and deeper the lake, the more difficult the fisherman's task becomes. 44 Through this analogy, Mao showed that with mass support the guerrilla could move throughout society with relative impunity.

Mao based his conclusion regarding the importance of mass support on China's revolutionary experience. Mao observed that Chinese history was pockmarked with 'roving rebels' who proclaimed themselves to be revolutionaries, but never did the political work necessary to obtain mass support. Of these he wrote, 'History knows many peasant wars of the 'roving rebel' type, but none of them ever succeeded.' 45

Comparative Vulnerability

In designing an overall counterinsurgency strategy, it is necessary to address each of the three components of Maoist strategy, not just the military component. This is an often overlooked fact in developing a grand strategy. The political component of any counterinsurgency must include programs designed to establish quality local governments which either meet the needs of the people or are able to reform to do so. The military component must address all three levels to ensure the local government can exist and flourish; to dislodge or destroy the local guerrilla and militia units; and to eventually destroy the insurgent regular forces. The United Front must be won over by political reform and the establishment of a government that meets the needs of the people. However,

political change and reform can be slow. As a result, it may be necessary to establish a secure environment before government sponsored political reform can take effect; win the people; and protect the people from retaliation and intimidation.

The question then develops: Of the three components of Maoist doctrine, which is most vulnerable to counterinsurgency action? The party is the most difficult to attack directly because it is composed of a nucleus of indoctrinated, die hard insurgents. Infiltration and destruction of the party are realistic goals, but difficult to accomplish with direct action.

According to Mao, the army is the defeat mechanism, but is illusive because of its guerrilla tactics. It actually invites attack to draw attention away from the political front. Thus, although the ultimate goal of counterinsurgency operations is to destroy the insurgent army, ill-planned, hasty, uninformed attacks contribute little to the counterinsurgency effort and can play into the hands of the insurgent.

The United Front helps provide mass support to the insurgent, often through legitimate organizations. Mass support is vital to the political and military components of insurgent doctrine. If curtailed or eliminated it would adversely effect both the other two components. As Corpus wrote, 'Absence or lack of mass support for the rebels, on the other hand, means early exposure of their forces, starvation, lack of replacement personnel, and early annihilation.' 46

Mao did not take mass support for granted. He wrote in length concerning the need to guard against counterrevolutionary forces that could wrestle mass support away from the insurgent. He admitted this when he defined what he saw as the three types of geographical areas: guerrilla areas, guerrilla zones, and government areas.

Guerrilla areas are the desired end state of insurgent activity. In guerrilla areas the insurgent enjoys full mass support and political control. Quite simply, these are guerrilla controlled areas.

Guerrilla zones are disputed areas. In guerrilla zones both the government and insurgent forces share the benefits of mass support and political power.

Government areas are controlled by the government and the insurgent's power is extremely limited. In government areas the insurgent is most vulnerable and confines his actions to clandestine political and military operations.

Mao compared the battle to control these areas to a board game and "...moves to dominate spaces on the board."

47 Mao confirmed his belief that mass support could shift from one side to the other when he wrote:

Mistakes in our leadership and strong enemy pressure may cause a reversal of the state of affairs described above, i.e., a guerrilla base may turn into a guerrilla zone, and a guerrilla zone may turn into an area under relatively stable enemy occupation. Such changes are possible, and they deserve special vigilance on the part of guerrilla commanders. 48

The Combined Action Program

A controversial counterinsurgency tactic used by the Marines in Vietnam to deny the Viet Cong the advantages of mass support was the Combined Action Program (CAP). 49 CAP remains controversial today because, although the United States lost the war, CAP did achieve limited success. CAP was a tactic used by the U.S. Marines in Vietnam in support

of their alternative strategy of 'Clear and Hold' rather than General William C. Westmoreland's of 'Search and Destroy.'

The degree of its success, and the effect of that success on the overall war effort, was a hotly contested issue between the Army and the Marine Corps. The Army under Westmoreland viewed CAP as a sideshow that detracted forces from what should have been their primary of mission of searching out and destroying the large Viet Cong and North Vietnamese formations. The Marines viewed CAP as a way to isolate the insurgent and to force combat on more favorable terms.

Methodology

To determine the viability of CAP as tactic in a future counterinsurgency doctrine, this thesis will compare the tenets of CAP to Maoist doctrine concerning the benefits of mass support, as outlined in this Chapter. This thesis will evaluate CAP's effectiveness in relation to those areas to determine if CAP assists, detracts, or has no effect on each area.

For example, one of the benefits of mass support is the guerrilla's ability to replace his casualties and to recruit personnel for new units. If the evidence proves

that CAP is able to assist in population control and curtail the guerrilla's ability to replenish his supply of men, the thesis will conclude that CAP had a positive effect on the overall counterinsurgency effort. If the evidence proves that CAP resulted in further alienating the people and drove them into the guerrilla's camp, then the thesis will conclude CAP had an adverse effect. If, the evidence is inconclusive, the thesis will conclude: no effect.

The thesis will also determine if CAP compliments, detracts or is irrelevant to current counterinsurgency doctrine as published in FM 100-20.

CHAPTER I: ENDNOTES

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- 37 Mao, On Guerrilla Warfare, 73.
- 38 Griffith, Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare, 22.
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- 43 In the case of the Chinese revolution, for
example, the Red Army offered its soldiers a choice between
acupuncture or western medical treatment.
- 44 Mao, On Guerrilla Warfare, 92-3.
- 45 Mao, Selected Military Writings, 167.
- 46 Corpus, Silent War, 39.
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- 49 CAP was an acronym used to mean both Combined
Action Program and Combined Action Platoon. In this thesis
I will use CAP to mean the program. When referring to the
platoons, I will use the words platoon or unit.

CHAPTER II

THE COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM

This chapter will discuss CAP from a historical perspective in order to give the reader a better understanding of CAP and its place in history. This is necessary because CAP was a unique phenomenon that existed for only a finite period. While the concept behind CAP, to use Americans in conjunction with local troops, was not new, and indeed had been used by the Marines in Latin America, the extent to which CAP integrated United States and native troops was revolutionary. For simplicity, this material will be covered in six phases:

- Events leading to the introduction of Marines into Vietnam
- Events leading to the inception of CAP
- The beginning of CAP
- The expansion of CAP
- The shift from stationary to mobile CAPs
- The demise of CAP

The final portion of this chapter will discuss some positive and negative aspects of CAP that were unique to the program as administered in Vietnam. These aspects will be addressed in this chapter rather than in Chapter III, because they were the result of circumstances in Vietnam. As such, their impact, or lack of impact, was an execution variable rather than a conceptual variable. Although these are important for understanding how CAP worked in Vietnam, they may or may not exist in other counterinsurgency efforts.

Events Leading to Introduction of U.S. Marines

By 1965 U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) diagnosed the situation in South Vietnam as critical with the insurgent forces in the third stage (strategic offensive) of a Maoist style insurgency and the government on the verge of defeat. The United States response was to introduce American ground forces to 'halt the losing trend' of the U.S. backed Republic of Vietnam (RVN) forces. 1

On 8 May 1965, General Westmoreland outlined a three phased strategy to support the RVN against the insurgent forces. His strategy consisted of:

- Stage 1: Secure bases within South Vietnam that could be supported by artillery.
- Stage 2: Engage in offensive operations and deep patrolling with forces of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).
- Stage 3: Act as a reserve for ARVN units. 2

Marine participation in Vietnam began on 8 March 1965 with the landing of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) near Danang. By mid May the entire III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), which included the 3d Marine Division (3d MarDiv), the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW), and the 3d Force Service Support Group (3d FSSG), had landed. The 3d MarDiv provided security for the 1st MAW at Danang. The 3d FSSG provided combat and combat service support for the MAF.

While establishing their lodgement in the vicinity of Danang, the Marines engaged and defeated a regimental sized Vietcong force in Operation Starlight in August 1965. This battle was significant in that it was the first major engagement in which the Vietcong felt the full weight of American military power. While the insurgents would repeat their mistake by standing up to Americans in battles like Chu Phong and Ia Drang Valley where they were decimated by superior American forces, they soon reverted to guerrilla tactics and refused decisive engagement. This

was the first of several times that the VC would move backwards from stage three to stage two of Maoist insurgency doctrine.

American military power stabilized the situation and removed the threat of immediate collapse of the government of the RVN. During and after the stabilization, the US forces shifted to the second phase of MACV's strategy: Offensive Operations. This strategy evolved into what later would become known as "Search and Destroy." It consisted of aggressive operations to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy. Without going into great detail on the strategy, two key points must be understood. First, this strategy drew the American forces away from the populated areas and second, this strategy caused an escalation that shook the very core of the Vietnamese society.

The move of American combat forces away from the populated areas was a conscious decision made by General Westmoreland. He made this decision based on what he perceived to be the most serious threat and the most logical way to handle it. On this he wrote, "Since the most serious and immediate enemy threat was in the Central Highlands, I deemed it essential...to deploy an American force there." 3

In making this decision Westmoreland chose to use American forces as the primary combat force, and to use ARVN forces as the pacification force. He based this decision on the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the two forces. He understood that the US forces were better trained and led, and, therefore, had a greater combat capability. He also knew that the US forces possessed greater mobility and firepower and were, therefore, more suited as the combat force. Finally, he believed the ARVN forces were better suited to conduct pacification operations within their own country and that it was prudent to separate the American troops from the population:

The fewer Americans in close contact with the people also meant that much less provocation of the xenophobia of the Vietnamese, that much less opportunity for unfortunate incidents between American troops and the people. 4

The effects of the "Search and Destroy" strategy were far reaching. One of the most dramatic effects of the escalation that ensued was its effect on the people. It created an attitude toward the Vietnamese people that enabled Americans to justify their actions as militarily expedient. Westmoreland defended the "Search and Destroy" policy and insisted that it was misunderstood. He said it was militarily necessary to relocate the populace of some villages and "That it was necessary on some occasions

intentionally to raze evacuated villages or hamlets apparently fed the misunderstanding.' 5 The fact that the senior American officer could rationalize razing Vietnamese homes was indicative of the American attitude.

While Westmoreland was moving towards 'Search and Destroy,' the Marines chose an alternate course. This is not to say the Marines did not participate in large scale search and destroy operations or raze villages. However, Marine leadership differed in its opinion on how to fight the war.

The Marine Corps had established its own pacification precedents in the Caribbean and senior Marine officers, as early as February 1963, considered adapting this experience to the Vietnam situation. 6

The Beginning

Then Marine Corps Chief of Staff and later Commandant, Lieutenant General Wallace M. Greene, was a proponent of a different strategy that focused on securing the support of the Vietnamese people. In A Soldier Reports Westmoreland commented on this difference of opinions.

At least one member of the Joint Chiefs agreed with Oley Sharp: General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps, one who sometimes made his points by an emotional raising of his voice. As a marine, Wally Greene thought in terms of beachheads. Visiting Vietnam, he tried to talk me out of my plan, but while I was determined that no American unit be subjected to the grim fate met in the Highlands by Groupement Mobile 100. I was convinced my plan was sound. 7

With Greene in opposing Westmoreland's strategy was another Marine general, Lieutenant General Victor Krulak. At the time, Krulak was the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific (FMFPac), which included administrative, but not operational control of the Marine units in Vietnam. Krulak vehemently disagreed with the search and destroy mentality.

We cannot be entrapped in the dangerous premise that destruction of the VC organized units perse is the whole answer to winning the war, any more than we can accept the erroneous view that pacification and civic action will solve the problem if major enemy forces are free to roam the countryside. 8

Krulak developed an alternative strategy that became known as 'Clear and Hold.' It was based on the demographics of Vietnam and oriented on securing the people, not hunting down and destroying the insurgent. Krulak believed that by securing the 90% of the population that lived along the coastal plain in Vietnam, the government could deny the guerrilla its most valuable resource, the people.

While we cannot leave any operational sector untended, all of them being important, the main target is still the little man in black pajamas with his burp gun. The war turns primarily on his destruction, and this can be achieved only by a painstaking program which aims first and foremost to separate him from the people upon whom his survival depends. 9

His strategy was to control the densely populated coastal regions through a policy of first pacifying an area (clearing) and then maintaining control (holding) to deny the insurgent access to the population. Through this policy he sought to isolate the insurgent from his base of support. This, Krulak believed, would force the insurgent into the dilemma of having to decide between leaving the protection of the jungle (thus, relinquishing the advantages of guerrilla warfare and fighting where he could be destroyed by American firepower) or dying more slowly through lack of support in the remote regions of Vietnam.

This is not to say that the 'Clear and Hold' strategy was designed to give the insurgent sanctuary in the mountains. It was not. Krulak's strategy simply called for the main effort of military operations to be shifted from the jungle to the coastal plains. Krulak understood the value of well planned and aggressively conducted offensive operations, but insisted that they only be mounted when the guerrilla showed himself or when the

allied forces had sufficient intelligence to reasonably ensure success. Krulak wanted to get away from the blind search and destroy operation that he thought "... was producing more problems than it solved." 10

Krulak developed his 'Clear and Hold' strategy based primarily on two factors. The first was his loss of confidence in the effectiveness of the existing 'Search and Destroy' strategy. The second factor was the lesson he had learned from the Marine veterans of the Small Wars.

Krulak's examination of the situation in Vietnam gave him good reason to doubt the effectiveness of the 'Search and Destroy' strategy. From it, he determined that by relying on large scale search and destroy operations, the United States was playing into the hands of the guerrilla.

Krulak based his examination on a variety of sources that all indicated the same thing: the strategy of 'Search and Destroy' simply was not working. Among Krulak's sources was the former Commanding Officer, 3d Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division, Colonel 'Hal' Moore. Shortly after Moore rotated out of Vietnam, he was interviewed by

Krulak. In that interview, Moore told Krulak, 'They (the Viet Cong) were leading the Army and the Marine Corps by the nose.' 11

The statistics regarding the quality of results of search and destroy operations were equally disheartening. They showed a dismal contact rate for search and destroy operations of less than 2%. They also showed the Viet Cong had the initiative. A 1966 study of over fifty operations (ranging from platoon to multi-battalion size), showed that in the vast majority (85%) of operations successful in gaining contact, the insurgent force initiated the contact. This was corroborated by a second study that examined an equal number of different cases and yielded an insurgent initiation rate of 88%. To make matters worse, in those cases where the insurgent initiated the contact, he achieved tactical surprise approximately 80% of the time. In fact, Krulak found that in only 5% of tactical operations did the American commanders believe they had a 'reasonably accurate knowledge of enemy positions and strength.' 12

The final ingredient in Krulak's examination of existing strategy in Vietnam, was a set of arithmetic calculations. Through them he forecasted the number of

U.S. and RVN casualties (at the advertised kill ratio of 2.6:1) needed to reduce the Viet Cong strength by 20%. The results Krulak obtained were staggering and convinced him that 'Search and Destroy,' would result in a war of attrition that the United States could not win.

The second factor used by Krulak in the development of his alternative strategy was the experience of the Marines who fought in the 'Small Wars' in Latin America as reflected in The Small Wars Manual. While a student at The Marine Officers Basic Course, Krulak was taught by the veterans of the 'Small Wars.' The stamp of the small wars veterans permeates Krulak's proposed alternate strategy. Their influence can be seen in Krulak's 'Clear and Hold' strategy, from his proposed use of combined units to his understanding of the need for political reform. 13

The implementor of Krulak's strategy was Marine Major General Lewis W. Walt. Walt was the Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force. Walt, like Krulak, had been instructed by the veterans of the 'Small Wars' in Latin America and shared Krulak's views. To implement the 'Clear and Hold' strategy, Walt designed a program to slowly, but steadily extend Marine/American influence outward from already controlled areas, until the entire

coastal plain in his area of responsibility was under Marine/American control. This concept is often referred to as the oil drop theory, because, conceptually, it resembles a drop of oil in water. The oil (representing the counterinsurgency force) begins as one large, concentrated drop in the water (representing the population). The natural interaction of the oil and water results in the large, concentrated drop gradually breaking up into a series of smaller drops that eventually dominate the entire surface of the water.

However, Walt was a man serving two masters. While he philosophically agreed with Krulak and Greene, he worked directly for Westmoreland. As a result, he was torn between the two. Eventually Walt settled on a policy that attempted to conduct the large unit search and destroy operations while simultaneously conducting clear and hold operations in the III MAF Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR). In the battle of priorities, however, the large operations took priority.

While the events discussed in the preceding pages regarding the differences in approaches had a significant impact on the incorporation of CAP into the overall strategy used by Walt, CAP was not the result of a

detailed analysis or study conducted by III MAF. It began as an expedient developed at the battalion level by officers trying to accomplish a very difficult mission with limited assets. Walt's contribution was that he quickly recognized the potential of CAP and used his authority and influence to implement it throughout the III MAF TAOR. Without Walt's backing, CAP may not have developed past the battalion level. Walt's, and the small wars veterans', influence is clearly visible. In fact, it is vintage small wars philosophy as can be seen in this quote from the Small Wars Manual:

Native troops supported by Marines are increasingly employed as early as practicable in order that these native agencies assume their proper responsibility for restoring law and order in their own (sic) country as an agency of their government. 14

CAP had its roots in the TAOR of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 3/4 (read three four), a ten square mile area around Phu Bai. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel William W. Taylor, was faced with a predicament. He was responsible for securing a large area, but lacked sufficient forces to do so. With his three rifle companies committed forward, Taylor's major concern was his rear. Although 3/4's (read three four's) rear was to the ocean, within its perimeter were six villages. Each of the villages was nominally protected by a South Vietnamese

Popular Force (PF) platoon. This offered Taylor little consolation because the PF's were notoriously ill-trained. A 1965 RVN government study noted that the PF platoons suffered from the highest desertion rate of any of the RVN forces, approximately 25% (four times that of the ARVN); had a high weapons lost rate; and had a high number of 'misbehavior incidents.' 15

Taylor's opinion of the PF's was based on his observation of them, not on any report. He noted they refused to patrol, and those that did man defensive positions, manned the same positions every night. This meant the VC knew where the PF's were, and, as if by agreement, the VC avoided the PF's positions on their way into the villages. 16

In The Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup, 1965, the authors credit Captain John J. Mullen, Jr., Taylor's Adjutant and Civil Affairs Officer, with the recommendation to tap a neglected resource, the PF's. 17 Taylor and his Executive Officer, Major Cullen C. Zimmerman (Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, Ret.), agreed that while Mullen might have talked about the idea, to say that Mullen or any other single individual developed the CAP concept

independently would be erroneous. The concept was more the product of a number of Marines throwing around ideas and finally settling on one that seemed to make sense. 18

Taylor tasked Zimmerman to develop the details of the proposed combining of US and Vietnamese forces. Zimmerman drew upon his knowledge of the British Army's experiences in 19th Century India. While studying British procedures of that era, Zimmerman had developed an appreciation for the British propensity towards "Brigading." He knew that by combining a British unit with one or more native units, the British were not only able to increase the size of their army for a comparatively small investment of British troops, but also succeeded in increasing the quality of the native units. This was in Zimmerman's mind when he developed the plan that called for combining a U.S. Marine rifle squad with a PF platoon to form an integrated self defense force that was able to protect the village from low level Viet Cong threats. The combining of the Marines and the PFs was seen as optimal since both brought unique qualities to the union. The PFs, a poorly trained and often neglected home guard, brought knowledge of people and terrain. They also brought the emotional benefits associated with defending their homes. The Marines brought the benefits of highly trained, well led, aggressive combat troops. 19

Once the plans were finalized, Taylor took the proposal to his regimental commander, Colonel Edwin B. Wheeler, and eventually to Major General Walt and Lieutenant General Krulak. Taylor had already obtained limited operational control of the PF's in his TAOR. This made the establishment of combined units a logical next step. Once the Marines gained the support of General Nguyen Van Chuan, Commanding General, 1st ARVN Division, CAP was born.

The Marine chosen to implement the innovation was a Vietnamese speaking officer, 1st Lieutenant Paul R. Ek; the location was Phu Bai. To set up the new program, Ek was given the support of the entire chain of command. Ek would later describe the men who volunteered as "the best men available." 20 However, Zimmerman told a different story. Zimmerman said he told the Company Commanders that he wanted a regulation squad of volunteers who were good, but not the best Marines in the company. He also told the Company Commanders that he would check on them so they (the Company Commanders) had better not try to slip any one by him. Zimmerman screened all the volunteers by service record and rejected those he felt were unqualified. Those he rejected were quickly replaced by Marines that met his guidance and after a "consultation" with Zimmerman, no Company Commander repeated his mistake a second time.

Zimmerman did not require the companies to sacrifice their capabilities to fill the ranks of CAP, but he did insist on quality Marines. Because his insistence on a complete squad, CAP automatically received extra benefits. These came in the form of mature, experienced sergeants with several years in grade as squad leaders, and corporal fireteam leaders, who themselves had at one time or another been squad leaders. So while Ek and Zimmerman disagree on Ek getting "the best men available," Ek did get above average Marines seasoned with experience and tempered with maturity. 21

Ek recognized the need for special training for these Marines before standing up the new units. 22 He conducted the training himself. It consisted of classes on Vietnamese customs, political structure, and language.

Although CAP was not officially approved until 17 November 1965, 3/4 Marines began working in the villages on 1 August. 23 At that time, Taylor gave Ek the mission of securing his assigned areas and training the PFs to do it themselves. 24 CAP's mission changed with its expansion. By mid-1966 it was assigned six missions:

1. Destroy the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) within the village or hamlet area of responsibility.
2. Protect public security and help maintain law and order.
3. Protect the friendly infrastructure.
4. Protect bases and lines of communications within the village and hamlets.
5. Organize people's intelligence nets.
6. Participate in civic action and conduct propaganda against the Viet Cong. 25

By 1970 those missions had been modified to:

1. Destroy the VC infrastructure within the village or hamlet area of responsibility
2. Provide military security and help maintain law and order.
3. Protect the friendly political structure.
4. Protect bases and lines of communications within the village and hamlets in which they are located by conducting day and night patrols and ambushes in the assigned area.
5. Contribute to combined operations with RF, ARVN, FWMAF, and other PF units in their area.
6. Participate in civic action and conduct psychological operations against the Viet Cong.
7. Participate and assist in RD (Revolutionary Development) activities to the maximum extent possible, consistent with the accomplishment of the foregoing missions/tasks.
8. Provide further training to the PFs to prepare them for the first seven tasks when the Marine squad is relocated. 26

Although CAP went five months without significant contact, its impact was immediate and promising. 27 Taylor noticed an immediate improvement in the newly formed units. 28 The previously immobile, incompetent PFs were patrolling, setting ambushes, and improving tactically. By moving into the villages the Marines upset the status quo and knocked the VC off balance. What the VC had considered secure and taken for granted became contested. This was supported by a note found on a captured VC that said, 'There were at least 4,000 Marines in the area. You could not move anywhere because Marines were always in the way.'

29

Expansion

The early reports by Ek, Taylor, and others indicated promise in the infant CAP. Seizing on this early success, Walt made the connection between CAP; what he had been taught by the veterans of the small wars; the opinions of Greene and Krulak; and his own judgement and decided to expand the program. Of CAP, Walt would later write, 'Of all our innovations in Vietnam none was as successful, or as lasting in effect, or as useful for the future as the Combined Action Program.' 30

Walt made the decision to expand CAP. In a letter dated 5 January 1966, Walt recommended this expansion to Lieutenant General Nguyen Chanh Thi, Commanding General I Corps, stating, 'With your concurrence, I propose to expand the Marine/Popular Force program as established by your letter of 17 November 1965 to all Marine enclaves.' 31

The reasons Walt cited for this recommendation were the good training the PFs were receiving, the additional security the villages enjoyed, and that, 'When Marines and Popular Forces patrol together the problem of detaining innocent people is largely eliminated.' 32

In a response dated 28 January, 1966 Thi formally concurred with Walt's recommendation. In that letter Thi wrote the purpose of the expansion was to increase the fighting ability of the PFs. He also reviewed the progress of CAP to date when he wrote:

This policy has brought good results after its test period as follows:

- The fighting spirit of the PF has been restored.
- The PF have been compelled to move.
- The U.S. Marines and the PF have been able to exchange their fighting experiences; the mistakes by Allied troops which have proved to be harmful to the people have been decreased. 33

By July 1966 the number of CAPs had grown from the original 6 to 38; by December 1966 to 57. The number of CAPs peaked in 1970 at 114. This figure represented 2050 enlisted Marines, 42 Marine officers, 126 enlisted navy personnel (mostly hospital corpsmen) and 2 naval officers. These personnel were organized into four Combined Action Groups (CAG) with a headquarters at the MAF level called a Combined Action Force (CAF). At its zenith of 2220 Marines and sailors, CAP represented only 2.8% of the 79,000 Marines in Vietnam.

Mobile CAPs

Nineteen sixty-eight was a pivotal year for CAP. The Tet Offensive, growing concern over the number of American casualties, the election of a new president, and a move toward Vietnamization and pacification combined to change CAP. The U.S. priority shifted from 'Search and Destroy' to extricating the country from an unpopular war at minimum cost. The concern over casualties precipitated a change from static to mobile CAPs.

Prior to Tet, the rate of enemy contacts with the CAP units increased astronomically.

During the period of January through October, 1967, 14 percent of all enemy attacks in I Corps were directed against the CAPs. From the period November through mid-January, 47 percent of the attacks in ICTZ (I Corps Tactical Zone) were against CAPs. During the December 1967-January 1968 period, the number of VC contacts averaged about five per platoon per week. The number of contacts exploded to an average of 15 contacts during the period between 29 January and 9 February. 34

While this has been rationalized as a VC counter-reconnaissance effort in which some CAP units were overrun, its impact on CAP was far reaching. In the aftermath of Tet and with the emphasis on keeping casualties low, III MAF decided that CAP units were too vulnerable. This meant shifting from fixed bases to what was called Mobile CAPs.

The difference between a mobile and a fixed CAP was that the fixed CAP operated out of a fortified compound near or in a village. At times this compound served as a safe haven for local officials who felt it was unsafe for them to sleep in their houses. 35 In the mobile CAP, the Marines were not fixed to a fortification, but were continuously on the move.

The trade off was a potential loss of closeness to the people, for the reduction in vulnerability to attack. In theory, the fixed CAP's position was known and, therefore, vulnerable. The mobile CAP's position was generally known, but its exact location was not. This, in theory, decreased its vulnerability. The theory was that the mobile CAP unit could still protect its village from the outside, and rely on its mobility and stealth to prevent it from being overrun and thus, minimize casualties. The mobile CAP concept shifted the focus of CAP from protecting the people by presence, to protecting the people by killing VC while keeping American casualties low. The rationale was that the CAP units could reduce the intelligence and support for the VC, by making the VC afraid to enter the village at night because the VC never knew the exact location of the CAP. This concept was described in a III MAF staff paper as "A screen is porous, but conversely a wall is brittle and can be broken." 36

Although CAPs sacrificed a degree of control in the villages, the Marines proceeded with the Mobile CAP concept and by 1970 all CAPs were converted. According to the III MAF staff letter, the justification for this conversion included the facts that: the links with the PF's were still in tact; it avoided the 'mole' mentality of a static

position; it denied the enemy information as to the exact location of the unit, thus, reducing casualties; it allowed the Marines to make better use of supporting arms by being outside the populated areas; and allowed the Marines to concentrate their strength by not requiring the unit to guard a base. 37

Demise of CAP

CAP had reached its zenith early in 1970. However, the Marines were pulling out of Vietnam and CAP was being reduced in conjunction with this withdrawal. On 26 March 1970 operational control of CAP was transferred to the Army's XXIV Corps as III MAF prepared to redeploy to Okinawa. Lieutenant General Melvin Zais, Commanding General, XXIV Corps, at first said that he would keep CAP intact. However, XXIV Corps soon tried to combine CAP with CORDS. Colonel Theodore Metzger, then Director of CAF, successfully resisted this endeavor by insisting that CAP was not a civil affairs organization, but a tactical organization. This indicated a lack of understanding of CAP's purpose by the XXIV Corps staff. 38

However, the fact remained: the Marines were leaving. Although it would have been almost impossible to measure, the Vietnamese people's knowledge of the impending withdrawal of the Marines did negatively impact on their relationship with the Marines. This impact extended to CAP. Once the rumors started that the Marines were to withdraw some people turned cool towards the CAP units.

By February 1970, CAP was reduced to 1700 men. By September of 1970, only 34 CAP platoons remained with approximately 700 men in one CAG. This CAG was left in Vietnam as part of 3d Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) and withdrew with the MAB in 1971. In the last few months, CAP still continued to function and produce quality results. However, it became apparent to the CAP Marines remaining until the end, that the people were staying away because they did not know which way the wind was blowing.

When 3d MAB withdrew in 1971, a unique period in combined operations in American history ended. The end of this period set the stage for future debate about the value of the combined unit. While American military officers continue to debate the CAP concept, and its value as a counterinsurgency tactic, often with parochial interests sparking their positions, one soldier, General Ngo Quant

Traung, Commanding General, 1st ARVN Division, had no doubts about the program. General Traung clearly stated his position. When he was told that the Marines were being redeployed, he retorted, 'I don't care what you do with the rest of the units, but please don't take the CAPs.' 39

Timeless Characteristics

Throughout its existence, certain aspects of CAP remained relatively constant. Some of these aspects were positive and some were negative. It is important to note that the aspects of CAP discussed here apply to the CAP as used by the Marines in Vietnam from 1965-1971. Therefore, they may not apply to similar endeavors in the future, but they must be understood to fully understand CAP.

Negative Aspects

CAP had its negative aspects. The cumulative effect of these problems undoubtedly prevented CAP from reaching its fullest potential. To understand CAP, it is necessary to understand the five problems that negatively impacted on CAP. These five problems were: the differences between the Army and the Marine commanders' strategies;

sourcing of personnel; command relationships within CAP; logistical support; and the cultural differences between the Americans and the Vietnamese.

MACV vs III MAF

The first problem with CAP was that General Westmoreland failed to see the potential of CAP. Although Westmoreland complemented the courage and performance of CAP Marines, and even went so far as to publish a letter extolling the courage and dedication of the CAP Marines, he still pushed a policy that required Walt to conduct large scale operations on the DMZ. In so doing, Westmoreland showed that although he recognized the difference between his and the Marines' approach, he disagreed with the Marines on how to best fight the war:

During those early months, I was concerned with the tactical methods that General Walt and the marines employed. They had established beachheads at Chu Lai and Danang and were reluctant to go outside them, not through lack of courage, but through a different conception of how to fight an anti-insurgency war. They were assiduously combing the countryside within the beachheads, trying to establish firm control in the hamlets and villages, and planning to expand the beachhead gradually up and down the coast. 40

Westmoreland disliked being ignored and second guessed by the Marines, but was aware of the interservice politics, and chose an indirect approach to bring the errant Marines in line, "Rather than start a controversy, I chose to issue orders for specific projects that as time passed would gradually get the Marines out of their beachheads." 41

The long term effect of Westmoreland's insistence on ensuring III MAF followed his direction, was that CAP became part of the Marine's "Other War", and a lower priority. Because of this the Marines had to concentrate their resources on the large unit actions and CAP was placed on the back burner. Had CAP been the priority of effort that it was with 3/4, many of CAP's problems might not have developed.

Sourcing

Because CAP was a non-T/O organization until 1967 and competed for personnel against T/O units that were also short of personnel, it drew down on the available manpower to those other units. This competition for personnel caused a negative reaction from some non-CAP commanders.

This situation was further exacerbated because CAP not only competed for Marines, but it competed for the 'best men available.'

When CAP began with six squads from 3/4, what initially appeared to be a loss of a substantial slice of the battalion, was in fact an increase in personnel. Because the Marine squads and their accompanying Vietnamese platoons operated in the battalion TAOR, or adjacent to it, and under the battalion's operational control, the battalion enjoyed a net increase of six platoons. This arrangement was enjoyed by Lieutenant Colonel Taylor, but not his successors.

When 3/4 left the area the CAP platoons stayed. Because they stayed, the battalion was short six squads. This also put the CAP platoons in an awkward position of having to work with a new unit and to rely on that unit for support. The result of this, especially in the early expansion phases was the development of hostile attitudes towards CAP by many non-CAP commanders. They saw CAP as a liability that drew down on their available manpower and that required them to risk their Marines in reaction forces for the CAP units. One officer, Colonel Noble L. Beck, G-3, Operations Officer, 3d Marine Division, saw it this way:

Most often the infantry battalions were on the move from one area to another while the combined action units normally remained in the same locations. It was not infrequent that the infantry command was called upon to come to the aid of a combined action unit with its 'tail in a crack' in a situation unknown to the infantry commander in advance, and often this found him in an awkward tactical posture for response. 42

While some of the consternation over CAP sourcing was due to not completely understanding the CAP concept, in most cases it was simply a matter of competing priorities due to limited manpower. Colonel Charles E. Hatch, a tank company commander in Vietnam, experienced this dilemma first hand. Even with his own unit chronically short of personnel, he still had to provide 'qualified' Marines to CAP. Colonel Hatch lamented that, although he understood CAP's value, he was hard pressed to send his best people to fill the quotas that came down from higher headquarters.

43

The result of CAP's status as an unofficial, out-of-hide program until 1967 and a lower priority throughout, was that CAP suffered continuous manpower problems. Although in combat it is natural to experience manpower shortages to a degree, CAP averaged only a 60% (9.5 on hand for a T/O of 15) fill over its six years of

existence. 44 This number is well below what could be expected as shortages due to battle casualties and routine personnel turn over delays.

Another sourcing problem was that the quality of Marines being sought by CAP were in high demand throughout III MAF. The initial criteria CAP established was: a minimum of four months combat experience; the Commanding Officer's recommendation; no record of discipline action, and no discernible prejudices. Although the criteria did change, in particular the combat experience requirement, CAP continued to stress the need for quality Marines. Captain William T. Moore, the Logistics Officer for the CAF at the time of its stand down, remembered the CAF Adjutant meeting the incoming airplanes; being the first to screen the record books of the incoming personnel; and selecting the best possible Marines. 45

So while CAP continued to attract top quality personnel, after expansion it did not get the trained infantry men EK had. To make up for the lack of infantry experience CAP settled on increased training on infantry subjects at the CAP school near Danang and sought experienced leadership at the squad level. The CAP school

consisted of 109 hours of training: 53 hours of combat related training, 38 hours on Vietnamese subjects, and 18 hours worth of examinations, evaluations, and reviews.

Without the experienced infantrymen, CAP became more dependent on having quality squad leaders. To ensure the highest quality of squad leaders available, CAF officials tightened up the screening process for squad leaders. This tightening process went so far as to have the CAF Director personally screen all prospective squad leaders. 46

The expansion of CAP had required the Marines to adjust. Their adjustment was hampered from the beginning by competing priorities for personnel placed on Walt by the demands of fighting large unit actions on the DMZ. For this reason, Walt was never able to fully support CAP or move it off the back burner.

Command Relationships

The second, and perhaps most critical problem, was that of command relationships. Because of the politics involved with combined operations, neither the U.S. nor the RVN were willing to allow the other command of its troops. As a result CAP's command relationships were at best hazy.

The command relationships were best defined in the early phases when 3/4 had operational control of both the American squads and Vietnamese platoons. In this arrangement the Vietnamese District and Village Chiefs retained only administrative control. The interests of both countries were looked after by a combined headquarters in which Ek was the commanding officer and Vietnamese Warrant Officer Nyugen Diem Duong was the executive officer.

When CAP was expanded the relationship to the parent Battalion and the command structure changed. What evolved was a system where U.S. personnel commanded U.S. personnel and Vietnamese personnel commanded Vietnamese personnel. It was left to the Marine squad leader and the PF platoon sergeant to 'cooperate.' How and why the policy of cooperation started is unsure. What is sure is that it came from the top. In a 4 February, 1966 letter to the Commanding General, 3d Marine Division, Walt wrote, 'In presenting the program to RVN officials, avoid the use of the term 'operational control' by substituting 'cooperation and coordination.' 47

Surprisingly enough, this system worked in most CAP platoons. In some cases this was because as former CAP Marine, Terry Hoover, said, 'We told them what to do and they did it.' 48 While there were those platoons that did experience difficulty, it appears they were a minority.

In 1969 and 1970 III MAF tried to get a handle on this problem by establishing CAP as a command, thus putting it on equal footing with all other commands. Colonel Theodore Metzger became the first Combined Action Force commander, but even this failed to resolve the problem of duality of command. In the end it seems, 'This awkward system depended for its effectiveness almost entirely on trust and respect between the Marine and PF leaders.' 49

Another aspect of the lack of a solid command structure was that CAP was never fully integrated into the entire war effort. There was a policy that directed the integration of CAP, PF, RF and other units into the overall war effort. However, for each example of a successful CAP-line unit operation, there is an example of a CAP unit that failed to be supported.

Some Marine units sought support from CAPs when operating in areas that had a CAP unit. As the Operations Officer for 3d Battalion, 3d Marines (3/3: read Three Three), then Major C.D. Dean (Brigadier General, USMC, Ret) worked with the CAP units around 3/3's TAOR. He wrote:

As a result, I normally visited each CAP platoon and every friendly unit every afternoon to try to ensure we were fully coordinated for each of our planned activities for the coming 24-hour period. The CAP's were of great assistance in keeping me continuously informed of friendly unit movements and displacements into and out of their platoon areas of responsibility. 50

Other Marine units conducted larger operations in which they used the CAP, PF, and RF units as part of their maneuver forces. However, this appears to have been more the exception than the rule. More often, Marine line units used individuals from these units to assist with a particular situation. This was because, although the Marines respected some of the individual Vietnamese's tactical abilities, they had little respect for the Vietnamese units. Major T.M. Pratt summarized this feeling when he wrote:

'Although the local units with whom we had contact left something to be desired as a group, the individual RF and PF, working as part of a Marine squad, habitually performed professionally.' 51

As a result of their dispersion and small size, CAP platoons often felt isolated. This was especially true in CAP's relationships with adjacent and supporting units. CAP platoons had to coordinate with these units for reaction forces and fire support. However, the CAP was often ignored or worse, considered a detriment to the line unit. This situation resulted in a degree of mistrust between the CAP Marines and the line units. This mistrust was even more prevalent between the CAP Marines and adjacent or supporting U.S. Army or ARVN units.

While the lack of a well-coordinated command structure had little impact on the Marines and their work inside the villages, the Marines failed to capitalize on CAP. Not only did this situation result in the CAP unit's developing a feeling of isolation and a sense of lack of support, but line units failed to use the benefits CAP could offer. Colonel Hatch stated that it was not uncommon for him, as a platoon commander during his first tour in Vietnam, to coordinate with CAP when passing through their TAOR. 52 However, he made this coordination on his initiative as a platoon commander and he knew of no formal program established for coordination between the line units and the CAP units. Colonel Hatch had to search out the CAP squad leader to fill him in on the details of the operation he was conducting. This appears to have been the norm.

Hoover remembered a similar lack of coordination in his CAP platoon. He recounted the story of an adjacent Army unit that would send patrols into his CAP platoon's TAOR without any coordination or even warning. In fact, he remembered that the only way the CAP Marines knew of the Army patrols was that they would periodically see an armored personnel carrier speed down the road, drop off a squad of soldiers, and then speed away. The Army squad then patrolled back to the Army units position. However, neither Hoover's CAP or the Army unit ever coordinated these patrols or even to Hoover's knowledge talked to each other about anything. 53

In doctrine, adjacent units are required to coordinate with each other. Metzger insisted that CAP units, as units, deserved the same rights of coordination as any other unit. In some cases they did receive the same consideration as larger units. Across the broad spectrum, however, there does not appear to have been a formal process to synchronize the work of CAP units with the adjacent line units. If there was one, it was not well used. This shows that CAP was not fully integrated with the overall effort. This was indeed a shame, because those who were astute enough to do so usually profited from the

experience. Those who did not operated in an environment where, as often as not, the right hand did not know what the left was doing.

Logistics

The fourth area that was a problem for CAP was logistics. Even as CAP developed coordination problems as it expanded, so too did it develop logistical problems. CAP Marines found themselves having to scrounge for such things as barrier material. The widely spread locations and lack of overall structure exacerbated the logistical problems. As Captain William T. Moore, S-4 for CAF from 1969-1970, pointed out, 'Let me put it this way: Our priority requisitions were not treated the same as priority requests for the line units.' 54 Once again competing priorities caused CAP to take a back seat to big unit actions.

Cultural

The primary criticism of CAP was that because of the cultural differences between the United States and Vietnam, it was doomed from the start. The cultural differences between the two countries did impact on CAP. However, the

extent of that impact seems to have been overstated by many of CAP's critics. The most obvious limitation, and most frequent criticism, was the lack of language training. Much has been made of the lack of language training among the CAP Marines. This appears to be much ado about nothing. While most of the Marines never learned the language, they did manage to communicate sufficiently to form cohesive units.

However, as Master Sergeant Larry Gates, USMC, (Ret), observed, Americans coming to Vietnam for the first time definitely experienced 'Culture Shock.' Some of the differences were the physical such as open sewer systems, but most were attitudinal such as public defecation, public filth, and such customs as members of the same sex holding hands. 55 While these did require a degree of adjustment, they were not show stoppers and most Marines made the necessary attitudinal adjustments.

Perhaps the most significant attitudinal difference to CAP Marines was the general acceptance by the Vietnamese that it was permissible to steal from Americans. Because of their closeness to the people, CAP Marines were especially sensitive to this. This attitude was based on the logic that since the Americans were rich, and the

Vietnamese were poor, it was permissible to steal from the haves, if you were a have not. Gates noted that when this happened the Marines felt like 'kicking the nearest Vietnamese's teeth in.' 56

While the effect of the cultural differences on the overall counterinsurgency effort is beyond the scope of this thesis, the Marines were aware of the differences and the potential pitfalls therein. In an attempt to prevent or minimize these potential pitfalls, the Marines instituted an education program throughout III MAF designed to familiarize Marines with the Vietnamese culture. This instruction was also included in the CAP school, where it was 'drilled into CAP Marines.' 57

The Positive Side

Even with its status as 'The Other War,' CAP achieved some significant results in Vietnam. CAP improved relationships between the Americans and the Vietnamese; reduced collateral damage; and gave the Marines a sense of purpose and fulfillment never achieved by most Americans in Vietnam.

Improved Relationships

The Small Wars Manual warns of the necessity to anticipate and compensate for the cultural differences between the Americans and the native people. 'Social customs such as class distinction, dress, and similar items should be recognized and receive due consideration.' 58

As already discussed, the cultural differences between the Americans and Vietnamese were considerable. The failure of many Americans to understand that different was not necessarily bad, resulted in a degree of the xenophobia that Westmoreland had wanted to avoid. The separation of the two peoples contributed to this. Heunh Ngo, a former Vietnamese government official with the Revolutionary Development Program during the war (now a naturalized American citizen), said that, although the Vietnamese were an extremely friendly people, they were misunderstood and disliked by the Americans. Ngo thought that this was a result of the distance maintained between the two peoples. He thought that this ignorance created a fear or mistrust within the Americans and that this mistrust in some cases resulted in abuses by the Americans. Ngo summed up his feelings by saying, 'The Marines were so young and so brave, but they didn't

understand the people.' 59 This he believed led to the use of tactics that served no beneficial purpose, but only acted to widen the gulf between the two peoples. As an example, Ngo cited the large operations that he witnessed where the Americans would sweep through an area and collect up all the people they could. Ngo said that this type of operation seldom captured any VC, but did anger the people.

Former CAP Marine, Terry Hoover, observed that Marines in line units reacted differently to the Vietnamese civilians than he and his fellow CAP Marines did. Hoover recalled when a Marine company moved into his CAP's TAOR to bivouac (without any prior coordination or warning) and deliberately isolated itself from the local Vietnamese. Hoover observed that the Marines in the company wanted nothing to do with the local Vietnamese, even those that he and his fellow CAP Marines lived among. The Marines in the line unit set up a perimeter and even chased away the Vietnamese children who were accustomed to associating with the CAP Marines. It was obvious to Hoover that the Marines in the line unit saw the Vietnamese only as a threat. 60

Hoover's and Ngo's observations have been corroborated by several sources. The most analytical evidence that corroborates their testimonies was a 1966

study conducted by Navy Chaplain Lieutenant Commander Richard McGonigal. Relying on his educational background (Masters Degree in Sociology), McGonigal conducted a random survey of both American Marines and Vietnamese civilians. In that survey McGonigal collected evidence that clearly indicated that CAP had definitely improved the relationships between the Marines and the Vietnamese. In this study McGonigal found that 44% of Americans polled said they liked the Vietnamese. The study showed that the Vietnamese felt more positively towards the Americans with 70% of the Vietnamese saying they liked Americans. However, the Vietnamese noticed a difference between CAP and other Marines. Of CAP Marines 'They thought...in fact, they would say, 'Why didn't you send these Marines in the first place?' or, 'What part of the United States do these guys come from?' or 'What schools did they go to?'" 61

Other evidence that CAP changed the attitudes of the people was the attitude of the Marines in CAP. That 60% of the CAP Marines voluntarily extended their tours for a minimum of six months, is a significant aberration from the norm in Vietnam. This was the result of two factors. One factor was a reluctance of the CAP Marines to return to what they saw as monotonous stateside routine. The second, and more important, factor was the close

relationships many Marines established with the Vietnamese in their TAORs. 62 Examples of these relationships abound in the literature on CAP. One example was the Marine, who said:

I used to be with a line company up on the 17th parallel, and there's a big difference in the way that you treat people. In a line company you're in a lot of combat and you're always tired. I went a month and a half averaging three hours of sleep a night. You don't really care about the people. You just want to put in your time and get out. Here with the CAP you're not just killing VC, you're helping people and you can see the progress you're making. I like the Vietnamese; they're real friendly, devoted once they get to know you. 63

Collateral Damage

The close relationships CAP Marines established with the people also resulted in localized reductions in collateral damage. In The Village, Frank J. West writes about the CAP Marines in Binh Nghia deciding against ever using indirect fire again after a stray artillery round killed two Vietnamese women.

But two women were dead because of firepower gone awry, and the black ashes of the house could be seen by patrols coming and going from the fort, a constant reminder which for seventeen months affected, if it did not actually determine, the American style of fighting in the village of Binh Nghia. The Marines saw too much of the villagers, and lived too closely with them not to be affected by their personal grief. Besides, the Americans had to patrol with the PF's, whose own families were scattered throughout the hamlets and who were naturally concerned about the use of any weapon that might injure their relatives. The rifle--not the cannon or the jet--was to be the primary weapon of the Americans in Binh Nghia. 64

The Marines unanimously decided to forgo the use of fire support and risk their lives rather than risk killing another villager as a result of a stray round. Through this decision the Marines displayed a degree of empathy directly opposite the attitude that excused razing villages as militarily expedient.

Major Edward F. Palm, a former member of CAP platoon Tiger-Papa-Three gave another example of how the CAP's presence helped minimize collateral damage. In his article in the February 1988 issue of the Marine Corps Gazette entitled "Tiger-Papa-Three: The Fire Next Time" Palm wrote of how the village his CAP was near was mistakenly attacked by an AC-47 gunship. Because his CAP was there, they were able to stop a second attack by the gunship and potentially save lives. 65 Here again, similar to the numerous examples available concerning the close relationships

developed between CAP Marines and the Vietnamese, there are numerous other examples of how CAP helped protect the people from becoming mere statistics.

A Sense of Purpose

The Marines in CAP shared a sense of purpose not evident in other Marines serving in Vietnam. The major indication of this was the previously mentioned 60% extension rate of CAP Marines. While some of the reasons may not have been altruistic (Hoover said many Marines extended to avoid tedious garrison duty states side), this high of a percentage was certainly unparalleled in III MAF. This unprecedented extension rate occurred despite the fact that CAP Marines were more likely to be killed (12%), wounded (75%), or wounded a second time (30%) than any other Marine in Vietnam. 66 Captain Moore, a two tour veteran of Vietnam, attributed this to the feeling of satisfaction the Marines gained from working so closely with the people. He summed up his feelings by saying, 'After twenty-three years in the Marine Corps, CAP was the most satisfying thing I'd ever done.' 67

Summary

As with any generalization, exceptions exist to the situations described above. There were examples of misconduct towards the Vietnamese by CAP Marines; CAP units that failed to establish either a cohesive tactical unit with the PFs or a close relationship with the people; and of betrayal and deceit by PFs and Vietnamese civilians. However, these cases are clearly exceptions that blemished, but did not destroy the positive effects of CAP. The degree of its success, and the effect of that success on the overall war effort, remains a contested issue. The remainder of this thesis examines the CAP concept vis-a-vis Maoist doctrine in an attempt to determine if the Combined Action Program has potential for future use.

CHAPTER II: ENDNOTES

- 1 General William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 172.
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- 3 Ibid, 174.
- 4 Ibid, 175.
- 5 Ibid, 184.
- 6 Jack Shulimson and Major Charles M. Johnson, U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup 1965, (Washington, D.C. Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1978), 134.
- 7 Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, 144. In this quote, Westmoreland refers to "Oley" Sharp. This referral is to Admiral Ulysses S. Grant "Oley" Sharp who was Commander in Chief Pacific, CINCPAC, in 1965. Admiral Sharp believed a more temperate strategy, such as the one put forth by Krulak.
- 8 Shulimson, U.S. Marines in Vietnam 1965, 111.
- 9 Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, "The Guerrilla and Reality", Marine Corps Gazette, July 1966, 44.
- 10 William R. Corson, The Betrayal. (New York: ACE Books Inc., 1968), 175.
- 11 Neil Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam, (New York: Random House, 1988), 683.
- 12 Corson, The Betrayal, 147 and Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie, 683.
- 13 Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie, 628.
- 14 Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, Small Wars Manual, (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1940), 7.
- 15 Jack Shulimson, U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War 1966, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1982), 240 and National Headquarters, Regional Forces/Popular Forces, "Popular Force Motivation Indoctrination Plan" (Cholon, Republic of Vietnam, 1965), no page number.
- 16 Colonel William W. Taylor, USMC, (Ret), phone interview by author, 10 March 1991.
- 17 Shulimson and Johnson, Marines in Vietnam 1965, 133-4
- 18 Taylor interview and Colonel Cullen Zimmerman, USMC, (Ret), phone interview by author, 2 March 1991
- 19 Zimmerman interview
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- 21 Zimmerman interview

22 Ek originally named the combined unit a Joint Action Company after the British examples in Malaya. To avoid confusion and having to continually switch back and forth between CAP and JAC, I will use the word CAP throughout.

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24 Taylor interview.

25 Michael E. Peterson, The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines Other War in Vietnam, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 35.

26 III Marine Amphibious Force, Fact sheet on the Combined Action Force, 22 January 1970, Enclosure (1), page 1. Obtained by author from Colonel Theodore Metzger, USMC, (Ret), former Commanding Officer of the Combined Action Force (CAF).

27 Shulimson and Johnson, Marines in Vietnam 1965, 136-7. The first reported engagement by a CAP was on 29 Nov 65, when a CAP platoon ambushed a VC platoon, killing four VC. The CAP platoon did not suffer any casualties.

28 Taylor interview.

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30 General Lewis W. Walt, Strange War, Strange Strategy, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970), 105.

31 CG, III MAF, 5 January 1966.

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33 Commanding General, I Corps Tactical Zone, RVN to Commanding General, III MAF, 28 January 1966, copy in CARL.

34 Peterson, The Combined Action Platoons, 56-7.

35 The number of officials willing to sleep in their houses was an unofficial means CAP used to measure its success.

36 III MAF unsigned point paper from the personal papers of Captain William T. Moore, USMC, (Ret), former Logistics Officer, Combined Action Force, III MAF during author's interview 2 February 1991, Kansas City Kansas.

37 Ibid

38 Cosmas and Murray, U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1970-71, 142.

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- 45 Captain William T. Moore, USMC, (Ret), interview by author, 2 February 1991, Kansas City, Kansas.
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- 53 Hoover interview.
- 54 Moore interview.
- 55 Master Sergeant Larry Gates, USMC, (Ret), interview by author, 21 February 1991, Kansas City, Missouri.
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- 61 Peterson, The Combined Action Platoons, 42-4, 92.
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- 63 Corson, The Betrayal, 194.
- 64 Frank J. West, The Village, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 35-6.
- 65 Major Edward F. Palm, 'Tiger Papa Three: The Fire Next Time', Marine Corps Gazette, February 1988, 72.
- 66 Hoover interview and Major Gary L. Telfer, Lieutenant Colonel Lane Rogers, and V. Keith Fleming, Jr., U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese 1967, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1984), 188.
- 67 Moore interview.

Chapter III:

Analysis

This chapter will analyze CAP in relation to the Maoist principles outlined in Chapter I. In particular it will examine the impact CAP had on the insurgent's access to mass support and any degradation of those benefits of mass support. For simplicity, this chapter will be subdivided by military staff section (G/S-1 Personnel, G/S-2 Intelligence, etc.).

However, the chapter will not follow the numerical sequence of staff sections (G/S-1 first, then G/S-2, ect.), but will begin with an examination of the G/S-3: Operations and Training. This is necessary because of the relationship between the tactical proficiency of CAP and its impact on the other staff sections.

G/S-3 Operations and Training

Chapter I outlined the operational benefits of mass support to the insurgent. These included, destabilizing the government's rear; increasing friction; developing a never ending feeling of vulnerability; pinning down government troops; and operating in conjunction with regional or regular forces.

It is difficult to evaluate CAP's ability to counter these because, while there is an ample amount of subjective and objective evidence available, that evidence can be misinterpreted if taken out of context or misrepresented. Therefore, this portion of the thesis will measure CAP's effectiveness as a counter-Maoist tactic in the operations and training area by examining CAP's effectiveness in providing security for the villages and in training the PF's to protect themselves.

Setting the Stage

The concept of a home defense force or militia is not new. In fact, it is currently a generally accepted counterinsurgency procedure. Its importance stems from the most basic need of any human--security. On this subject

Sir Robert Thompson wrote, 'Unless protection is provided, popular support will be unobtainable.' 1 In Vietnam, the protection of the rural populace was most often the responsibility of the poorly trained, ill-equipped PFs. The PFs were, 'The largest armed body in close contact with the people.' 2 They were also the VC's direct competition for control of the people. At the PF level the combat was 'mano a mano' and the PFs usually lost. It was this situation CAP was designed to change.

What made CAP different than other programs to develop home defense forces was the concept of 'brigading' at the platoon level. The intent behind this was to combine a regular unit with a militia unit in order to improve the quality of the militia unit while steadily increasing government control.

As covered in Chapter II, CAP was started as a tactical expedient to help secure a battalion's rear. This was precipitated because in the Battalion Commander's judgement the battalion lacked sufficient personnel to secure its entire TAOR and the home defense forces that were suppose to be protecting the villages in the battalion's rear were totally ineffective. Lieutenant Colonel Taylor's opinion of the effectiveness of the PF's was a commonly accepted fact.

While there may have been some combat effective PF platoons in 1965, as a whole the home defense or militia program was a dismal failure. The PFs were poorly trained, ill-equipped, and unmotivated. This statement is substantiated not only by a RVN policy that made the PF units a low priority, but also by the observations of the Americans. They noted that in most cases the PF's were armed with an odd assortment of World War II vintage rifles, performed poorly against the VC, and had a high desertion rate. Taylor observed the PFs had lost their motivation and would only occupy static positions from which they refused to move or patrol. 3 This, in effect, left the village wide open to VC infiltration. This was the situation when the Marines of 3/4 were introduced into the villages in August 1965.

The advent of CAP brought to the PF units strong leadership and an aggressiveness that had been lacking. When the Marines began working with the PFs, the Marines "...treated them (the PFs) like human beings." 4 The value of this is impossible to measure, but CAP brought the previously ignored and berated PF the attention needed to correct its deficiencies. CAP was not nominal support where someone only went through the motions, but a long term commitment where hardships were shared.

One key element of CAP was the training the Marines gave the PFs. This training was not classes by someone who was there one day and gone the next. It was done by men who worked, ate, slept, and bled with the PFs. The Marines trained as they led, by example. 'They (the PFs) watched the Marines care for their weapons, and followed suit.' 5 The results were promising. Major Donald J. Myers observed that the PF's and RF's marksmanship skills improved simply because they had ammunition to train. Their patrolling activities increased because they no longer felt isolated. Myers also noted that as their confidence grew, they extended their patrolling activities into areas they had previously refused to enter. Like any other military operation, success was contagious and built upon itself. The catalyst that started this transformation and the propellant that kept it going was the fact that throughout their development that Marine squad was always there supporting, prodding, and teaching by example. 6 In the words of one PF soldier, 'The Americans (CAP Marines) were so brave that we became brave, too.' 7

Learning, however, was not a one way street. The Marines quickly learned to rely on the PF's excellent ability to detect movement at night. 8 The Marines also

learned to move more quietly after their PF counterparts complained that the Marines made too much noise on the patrol. 9

A second key element the Marines brought with them was the increased firepower of modern weapons, virtually unlimited ammunition, and the remainder of the infrastructure of the United States Armed Forces. To the PF soldier this meant artillery or mortar fire if needed, reaction teams that would really come to his assistance, and a guarantee of medical evacuation and treatment if wounded. This type of support was indispensable in bucking up PF morale. In effect, brigading with the Marines gave the ignored, undertrained, and abused PF the means to fight and win.

The infusion of the Marines forced the PFs out of their static positions, and began an aggressive patrolling program that resulted in increased morale, security, and proficiency among the PFs.

Statistics

There is an abundance of statistical data concerning CAP. In Vietnam, the Americans designed programs to measure the degree of pacification in villages. In two of these programs, CAP protected villages scored well above the I Corps average. In the 1966 Pacification Scale, CAP protected villages averaged an improvement of 20% over their previous, non-CAP status. 10 In the later Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) used by MACV, CAP averaged a 2.95 on a 5.0 scale when the I Corps hamlet average was 1.6. 11

A reduction of the PF desertion rate to almost zero supported these evaluations. 12 A kill ratio sometimes reported as high as 14:1, when line units were reporting ratios of 3:1, also supported the evaluations. As did the fact that, CAP protected villages enjoyed a significant drop in terrorism in 1966, with murders down 50%, kidnappings down 36%, and attacks down 21%. 13

A more significant way of evaluating CAPs effectiveness in establishing local security is to compare the PF units with Marines to those without. CAP PF units represented 12% of all PF units. Yet, CAP PF units yielded 29% of the enemy KIA's and 40% of the weapons captured by all PF units. 14

Another way to try to statistically analyze the value of CAP is to measure the amount of collateral damage caused. This is based on the premise that collateral damage is counterproductive and if not checked will serve to alienate the people. There can be little doubt that CAP helped reduce collateral damage. During a six month period in the village of Binh Nghai there were over 100 separate firefights between the CAP units and the VC. In those actions six Marines, seven PF's, and forty-eight VC were killed. Although any number of civilian casualties is a travesty, the fact that in the midst of this type of action only two civilians were killed is remarkable. 15

Another way to evaluate the effectiveness of a program on the civilian population is to take a look at who is being killed. Since killing civilians is counterproductive, any program that is able to identify and kill the insurgent, while minimizing the number of civilians injured or killed, is beneficial to the counterinsurgency effort. A method used to determine who is being killed is to compare the number of enemy killed to the number of weapons captured. This is based on the assumption that in an insurgency, an armed non-government person was an insurgent. According to Guenter Lewy, in his study of Vietnam, an acceptable standard for this ratio is

3:1. 16 During the 1966 to 1967, CAP units killed 5,221 Viet Cong and captured 2,120 weapons for a ratio of 2.5:1, well below the Lewy standard. 17 This indicates CAP's ability to distinguish between innocents and the VC. By doing this CAP was able to protect the village and less likely to alienate the people.

The enemy's perception of CAP is another means to measure its operational value. From the outset, CAP represented a unique threat to VC control of the villages. In 1967-68 CAP represented only 2% of the Marines in I Corps. Yet, in 1967 CAP units were involved in 17% of all the Marine firefights. In 1968 they were in 20%. This disproportionate share of the action was due in part to a VC mindset that required immediate attack of any government measure that threatened control of the villages. 18

An examination of CAP's existence in a village shows a pattern. Where most successful, that pattern included three phases. The first phase was the introduction of CAP and the resultant improvement in the village militia's tactical abilities and activities. The second phase was a VC counter offensive which often included attacks on the CAP compound. The third phase was marked by a decrease in VC activity (often even outright avoidance of CAP protected

villages by the VC), after the VC realized the Marines had come to stay. After this stage was reached, the security duties were turned over to the PF's and the Marines were relocated to another village. In the course of the war, CAPs reached this stage 95 times.

With all that has been said or written about CAP, one indisputable fact remains. Of the 209 villages protected by CAP units, not one ever reverted to VC control. Of all the data compiled, subjective or objective, this one undeniable achievement remains as an example of success unparalleled in the war. Just by their presence CAP units were able to establish RVN primacy and served as one fact that VC propaganda could not explain away.

G/S-3 SUMMARY

The preceding paragraphs have tried to quantify success in terms of government grading systems, kill ratios, enemy KIAs per captured weapon, desertion rates, reduction of civilian casualties, drops in recorded terrorist activities, and increased enemy attempts to eliminate the threat. When considered individually, each of them is inconclusive. However, when considered

collectively, they indicate a trend. That trend is: An increased performance of the home militia when combined with a regular unit. This increase resulted in a more secure environment in the village. Through this more stable environment the CAP units were able to begin reversing the benefits of mass support the VC had enjoyed and begin making inroads into their destruction.

G/S-1: Personnel

This portion will address the effects of CAP on both the enemy and friendly personnel situations. First will be an examination of CAP from the enemy prospective to determine CAP's ability to counter the insurgent's recruitment effort. Second will be an examination of CAP from the friendly prospective to determine any advantages CAP gave the friendly forces.

Combating Insurgent Recruitment

As noted in Chapter I, an insurgency must be able to replenish its ranks in order to survive and grow. To do this, the insurgent must have access to the people, since the people are his source of those replacements. Thus, any

program that negatively impacts on the insurgent's ability to access the people must have a correspondingly negative impact on insurgent recruitment and thus, the insurgency.

One way to measure a counterinsurgency program's impact on insurgent recruitment is to track the number of unexplained absences of military aged men. The problem with analyzing the effectiveness of CAP in this manner is the contradictory information on the subject. In The Betrayal, Corson wrote that in the CAPs that kept such statistics, the absentee rate of able bodied, military aged young men was less than .1% (170 of over 170,000). 19 This truly remarkable achievement meant that VC recruitment in those areas was virtually eliminated. No insurgency could long endure, much less grow with such a low number of recruits to replenish its losses and fill new units.

However, in Village at War, Trullinger wrote:

'During the entire period of Front activity, 1961-1975, there was a variation in the support guerrillas received locally, but little change in guerrilla recruitment problems.' 20

The contradiction of these two sources is not the only problem in relying solely on statistics. There is not sufficient data available on all periods of the war to

determine if CAP was able to maintain the same level of success throughout the war. So CAP's success may not necessarily indicate a trend. A more definitive statistical evaluation could be made if this type of information was available covering a wider area, a longer period, and took into account such parameters as pro or anti-government sentiment, Catholic or Buddhist, and other contributing factors. Even if available this information would be misleading, because CAP was not the only factor relating to VC recruitment. So while statistics are important, they are not the ultimate answer because there were too many other variables.

Rather than rely entirely on statistics, this thesis will evaluate CAP's protection techniques against the VC recruiting techniques. The VC adapted their methods to the situation and although they preferred volunteers, they did conscript and even impress when they needed. In 1962 the VC recruited men between the ages of 17 and 30. In 1963 the VC enlarged their recruiting zone to 17 to 20 and began accepting women. In 1964 they began drafting. 21

VC recruitment techniques varied from a soft-sell, ideological one-on-one approach to impressment. In between these two extremes were the adventurers, those cajoled into joining at mass rallies, and those who were willing conscripted. The three principle volunteer methods were:

The soft-sell approach was a method in which the local VC Cadre member would use anti-government propaganda to create a feeling of loyalty to the insurgent cause within the potential recruit. In this method the VC would play on the target's sense of loyalty to his friends, relatives or neighbors already in the movement to create a feeling of legitimacy and peer pressure.

The adventurers joined to fight. This type of recruit needed no invitation but actually sought enlistment for personal reasons.

The mass rally was a technique used by the VC in which young men were cajoled to volunteer by whipping them into a 'patriotic' fervor during a revival style pep rally. During these meetings the VC also gave thinly veiled threats that if someone did not join, his family could suffer.

While the exact number of young men recruited by each of the various techniques is not known, Corson's estimate for 1966-7 was that 40% were recruited by the ideological, soft-sell approach; 20% enlisted out a sense of adventure and moral conviction; and the remaining 40% were cajoled at mass rallies. 22

A 1969 study of VC defectors yielded somewhat different results'

A recent study indicated that 60 percent of the returnees (Chieu Hois) joined the VC simply because their villages and families were terrorized by the VC and they had no choice. Another 25 percent joined because they were lured by VC propaganda campaigns. 23

Regardless of source, all three of these methods required a degree of access to the population. While the VC had only to be there for the adventuresome, the criticality of VC access to the people in relation to the soft-sell and mass rally techniques increased dramatically. The more overt (eg: mass rallies) techniques required greater access. In fact, the mass rally was the VC's preferred recruiting method since it reached the greatest number of people at the least expense. As John C. Connell observed in his 1967 study of VC recruitment procedures:

A favorite recruiting device, used more widely in the earlier period but still prominent today is the large propaganda and recruitment meeting, most commonly held in VC areas and in contested villages. Even in villages where the government has firm control, however, Viet Cong units are apt to break in at night and summon the inhabitants to a meeting, at which they harangue the audience, collect taxes, and solicit recruits, and then depart before dawn, often deliberately ignored by the hamlet militia. 24

From this review of insurgent recruiting techniques, it can be deduced that denial of access to the people would destroy, and curtailment of access would hamper, the recruiting process. Although there is no evidence that as a whole CAP ever reached the level of population control attained by Corson, CAP undoubtedly impacted on VC recruitment. CAP imposed aggressive patrolling forced the VC agents and cadre underground. Without the freedom to act openly, the VC recruiting effort became clandestine and they were denied their preferred and most effective method--the mass rally. While the exact extent of damage done to the VC recruiting effort is difficult, if not impossible, to measure, the fact that they were denied use of a technique that yielded 40-65% of their recruits and helped protect the people from conscription and impressment, at a minimum, hampered their recruitment effort.

Force Multipliers

The second part of the personnel question is whether the program used adds or detracts from the friendly force structure. In CAP this revolved around the question: Was CAP a force multiplier in which by investing a limited amount of personnel a greater benefit was achieved; or could the resources channeled to CAP have been better used elsewhere? Without a doubt the CAP favorably influenced the Marines effort in the I Corps TAOR. The two personnel areas where CAP had the greatest influence were as an economy of force operation in the area of population control and in the expanding the force through development of effective units.

Economy of Force/Population Control

An economy of force operation is successful when a small force is able to free other units to support the main effort. The personnel investment the Marines made in CAP achieved this by not only helping secure the major units rear, but also by controlling a major part of the population in the Marine TAOR with only a minimum investment in personnel.

As mentioned in Chapter II, at its zenith CAP had 114 platoons. The Marine portion of this was 114 squads. The number of Marine personnel in CAP never exceeded 2300 Marines and sailors, or regimental size. However, this program provided security for 15% of the I Corps population or 400,000 people. 25 Assuming all CAP units were at authorized strength, this was accomplished at a cost of 15 Americans and 35 Vietnamese per CAP for a total of 5360 personnel (1770 Americans; 3390 Vietnamese). By extrapolating out these figures to account for the remaining 85% of the population of I Corps, 2.7 million people, an additional 37,400 personnel would have been needed to introduce CAP into every village in I Corps. The American portion of this would have been an additional 11,800 (total: 13,500) men and the Vietnamese portion 26,600 (total: 39,990) men.

While these numbers may appear staggering, they in fact represent a potential windfall. American forces in I Corps in 1969 numbered approximately 104,000 personnel and regular ARVN forces approximately 30,000. 26 Since most villages already had a Popular Force platoon, there would have been no additional personnel cost to the Vietnamese.

These numbers show that what may have appeared to be a waste of manpower, was instead a manpower conservation program. Through these rudimentary calculations it can be seen that CAP could have been implemented throughout the entire I Corps TAOR with a Division (-) sized commitment. The Marines could have accomplished this with 17% (13,500 of their 79,000) of their forces in I Corps. The Americans (Army and Marines) could have accomplished it with 13% of the 104,000 men in I Corps. By adding ARVN forces with the Americans, the percentage drops to just over 10% (13,500 of 134,000). In other words, a 13,500 man investment would have paid a dividend of 39,990 men or 296%.

This dividend was possible because CAP added effective combat units to the friendly force structure. Just as Colonel Taylor had experienced a net increase of six platoons at a cost of six squads, so too could I Corps have experienced a net increase in combat effective units. This point can be demonstrated by first reviewing what CAP actually accomplished and then extrapolating the numbers out to examine what could have happened.

As previously mentioned at its zenith CAP had 114 platoons. By adding those 114 to the 95 PF platoons that graduated from the CAP program and developed self sufficiency, the number becomes 209 effective platoon sized units. Considering the Marine infantry battalion in Vietnam had twelve rifle platoons (four rifle companies with three rifle platoons each), then the 209 CAP and CAP graduated platoons represent seventeen battalion equivalents added to the force for an investment of twelve Marine rifle company equivalents. If this line of logic is applied to the entire I Corps TAOR, then for an investment of twenty battalion equivalents the government would have reaped a benefit of ninety effective battalion equivalents. This appears to be a solid investment.

G/S-1 Summary

From the discussion above it can be seen that CAP was an effective counter to the benefits of mass support espoused by Mao in the personnel area. CAP was able to retard the Viet Cong recruiting effort which adversely affected the VC's ability to man his force. Additionally, CAP enhanced the friendly situation by adding seventeen combat effective battalion equivalents to the friendly force structure. While it would be a mistake to assume

that the CAP platoons ever reached the level of expertise of an American battalion, the simple fact is that they performed their mission so well that VC control was never regained in their area of operations.

G/S-2 Intelligence

The key to victory in a insurgency is intelligence. The insurgent uses intelligence in three ways. First, he uses it as a shield against government actions. By monitoring government troop locations, movements, and operations the insurgent is able to anticipate government actions and survive. Second, the insurgent uses the information he receives to determine government weaknesses. This allows him to retain the initiative and to attack on favorable terms. Third, the insurgent uses intelligence to develop a sense of the terrain in which he operates. This is an extremely important aspect because his superior knowledge of the terrain gives him a degree of mobility that can help offset the counterinsurgents greater technological mobility.

The insurgent's mastery of these culminates in his ability to avoid the large government formations on search and destroy style operations; to strike quickly and

decisively at a point of government weakness; and to disappear into the environment before the government can react. Just as intelligence is the key to being able to do this, it is the key to stopping it.

It is a long standing maxim that this intelligence shield must be penetrated by the counterinsurgency force to have any hope of defeating the insurgent. In this environment, however, it is not information from strategic assets, such as satellites or electronic intercepts, that carry the day. While these assets are important and have their uses, the type of intelligence that will carry the day in counterinsurgency operations is that obtained from people, or as referred to today: human intelligence (HUMINT). When properly collated, analyzed and disseminated, HUMINT gathered at the small unit or local police level is indispensable in separating the insurgent from his base of support, the people. CAP penetrated the intelligence shield of the Viet Cong and provided a benefits in all three areas mentioned above.

Terrain

Because CAP Marines stayed in one area and continuously patrolled through that area, they developed a thorough knowledge of the terrain in their TAORs. This is one theme that is repeated through out the CAP literature, and one fact that was not lost on the line unit commanders. In The Village, West described how the CAP Marines in Binh Nghia assisted a Marine rifle company by scouting for the company in a sweep through the CAP's TAOR.

27

Former CAP Marine, Terry Hoover, made a similar observation relating to the importance of gaining a knowledge of the terrain. Hoover's observation is particularly credible because of his varied experiences. When his enlistment expired, Hoover left the Corps, went to college, and upon graduation obtained a commission in the Army as a Second Lieutenant. He compared his knowledge of the terrain in his TAOR in Vietnam as a CAP Marine, to the knowledge of the terrain he developed while an Army Lieutenant at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Hoover noted that after repeated training exercises over the same area he honed his knowledge of the training areas to a degree that

he often land navigated without a map and compass. He said this was similar to the level of knowledge he reached in his TAOR in Vietnam as a CAP Marine. 28

It can be argued that an outsider can never reach the level of knowledge about an area as someone who lived in the area his entire life. The fact that the CAP Marines worked with the PFs, who had lived in the area their entire lives, renders that argument mute. The important point is that the CAP Marines, with the help of their PFs and because they remained in one locality, developed a knowledge of the terrain in their TAORs not enjoyed by most American line units. This helped offset a traditional VC advantage.

Intelligence

In MAO's example of mass support being a pond and the guerrilla being the fish swimming in it, intelligence is one of the keys to reducing the size of the pond and making the fish easier to catch. There can be absolutely no doubt that where CAP was employed it helped reduce the size of the pond by producing a steady stream of HUMINT. The CAP Marines were not skilled in the art of developing clandestine intelligence networks. However, by being in

the villages, they were able to draw upon a variety of sources of information. These sources included pro-government villagers, VC hating villagers, village chiefs, the PFs and themselves.

CAP Marines relied on their knowledge of the people and the PFs to gage the level of danger at any given time. Although not a flawless procedure, it was generally accurate. This was because, as General Walt put it:

The Popular Force soldier knew every person in his community by face and name; he knew each rice paddy, field, trail, bush, or bamboo clump, each family shelter, tunnel, and buried rice urn. He knew in most cases the local Viet Cong guerrilla band, and it was not uncommon for him to be related to one or more them by blood or other family ties.

29

The introduction of Marines into the villages brought almost immediate intelligence dividends. Colonel Taylor recalled that shortly after he put the first CAP units in the villages, the village chiefs "came across" with all kinds of information on who was VC and where their arms and supply caches were. 30 The FMFPac Reports, are overflowing with examples of HUMINT collected by the CAP units. Corson, Peterson, West, Shulimson, and, to a lesser degree, Walt cite numerous examples of information obtained by CAP Marines. The overwhelming preponderance of evidence conclusively proves that CAP was a fertile HUMINT conduit.

CAP's role in the intelligence collection process prior to the 1968 Tet Offensive is an example this. The previously discussed increase in activities at the CAP level was one indication CAP gave of the offensive. However, CAP did much more than simply act as a punching-bag style barometer. Throughout the VC buildup prior to the offensive, CAP units were reporting information about major VC troop movements that, if properly analyzed, could have compromised the VC plan.

The controversy over whether these reports were ignored as some CAP Marines felt they were, or whether they were the first and decisive intelligence by which III MAF cancelled the Tet Cease-fire agreement with the VC prior to the actual 'breakout of hostilities' as the CAP Director at the time stated, is beyond the scope of this thesis. The point here is that by being in the villages the CAPs collected sufficient information that, if properly processed, would have shown the large VC buildup. 31

From the information above, it can be seen that CAP was indeed able to penetrate the counterintelligence shield of the VC. From the PFs, from the people, and from their own observations, the CAP Marines collected information on the VC that helped reduce the size of the pond.

Counterintelligence

Counterintelligence operations are essential in all types of warfare. One method the Marine Corps has always insisted on as an effective counterintelligence tactic is aggressive patrolling. The rationale behind this concept is that aggressive patrolling keeps the enemy off balance, gives early warning, and hampers his reconnaissance efforts.

As already discussed, the infusion of Marines into the PF units substantially improved the performance of the PF's and as General Nguyen Chanh Thi wrote, 'The PF have been compelled to move.' 32 This compulsion was in the form of three patrols a day with the Marines. As a result, the number of patrols throughout I Corps, and specifically around the CAP protected villages, increased dramatically. Thus, if one accepts that patrolling is a good counterintelligence technique, then such a marked increase in patrolling activity was a healthy sign that had to have assisted the counterintelligence effort.

As discussed in Chapter I, using villagers for lookouts is standard Maoist procedure. Because of their closeness to the people, the CAP Marines were also able to

identify VC sympathizers who were acting as lookouts and distinguish the techniques they used to alert the VC. In The Village, West wrote of the techniques the lookouts used to warn the VC of a patrol's approach. These included loud coughing or banging pans together as the patrol passed. Because the Marines were always in the village and noticed that the warning signals were always coming from the same villagers, the Marines were able to take well directed, corrective action that impacted only on the perpetrators, and silence the VC lookouts. 33

G/S-2 Summary

By putting Marines in the villages, the Marines created an excellent intelligence vehicle that was successful in all three areas: terrain appreciation, intelligence collection, and counterintelligence. By living among the people CAP Marines enjoyed a degree of tangible benefits not shared by line units that merely passed through the area. While there might have been problems with the processing of the intelligence collected, there was no lack of available information. In his book, The Combined Action Platoons, Michael Peterson recounted an experience of a former CAP Marine, Jim Donovan, that

demonstrated how the intelligence available to CAP units differed from that available to the units that were merely passing through:

(W)e use to have patrols from 1/9 (read one nine) come real close to us. I went to the CO of the closest 9th Marines company and told him his men were way off and to please stay away. He told me I was full of shit and to get off his hill (Hill 21) I also told him my PFs said there were two NVA intel (intelligence) people living in the village near his hill. HE CAME UNGLUED! We (two Marines, 9 PFs, and an Army major) went down to the village and ended up, in daylight, in a 45 minute firefight.

We killed two, captured one NVA Intel officer, and six or seven VC captured (sic). The 9th never came down to see what was going on! We had a .45 pistol traced that one VC had. It belonged to a Marine who was KIA from the same hill. The captain would never talk to us again. He believed we were 'goofing off with the PFs.' 34

G/S-4 Logistics

An effective counter against the Maoist style logistical system must reduce the amount of support the guerrilla received from the people. In Vietnam a principle tactic used to do this was a large operation to guard the rice harvest. The effectiveness of these operations was disputed. Corson insisted on their effectiveness when he wrote:

The CAPs, in conjunction with conventional Marine forces, have literally denied the Viet-cong immediate access to 75 per cent of the rice crop in I Corps tactical zone in the past four harvests."

35

However, as with the personnel statistics, contradictory evidence exists. A Rand Corporation study released in 1967 found, "Even in areas where GVN control predominates the VC can gain resources by means of covert purchase or hit-and-run raids if not by direct taxation."

36

Similar to the personnel situation, the existence of contradictory evidence makes any statistical analysis inherently suspect. The variables for any such study are infinite and, therefore, invalidate the study. The question then becomes: In the absence of conclusive

statistical documentation, how can one determine the value of a program designed to curtail the amount of support the guerrilla receives from the people? The answer to this is not to compare numbers, but to contrast concepts. In this endeavor, this thesis will discuss the VC tax system from which the VC received their support and what, if any, effects CAP had on it.

Viet_Cong_Tax_System

The VC developed a sophisticated tax system that operated in all areas in Vietnam: VC controlled, RVN controlled, and contested. Its purpose was to support the military with the money and supplies necessary to prosecute the war. By 1967 the relatively simple voluntary contribution system the VC had used until 1963 had evolved into a complex bureaucracy which did "...not run itself..." and required "...a large number of well trained, educated administrators and collectors...." 37 The voluntary system was scrapped by the VC because it was inadequate.

The implementation of the tax system gave four benefits to the VC. First, it gave the VC a dependable foundation of support on which they could base plans for future operations and expansion. Second, it tended to

increase the legitimacy of the shadow VC government. Third, it was another means the VC used to control and subjugate the people. Fourth, it helped the VC stop corruption within their own ranks.

The VC tax system was a complex system that covered all aspects of Vietnamese life. The major types of taxes used by the VC were:

Agricultural Tax: This tax was most often thought of as a rice tax, but included all types of produce. It was the principle means used by the VC to feed their forces.

Transportation Tax: This tax imposed a tariff on people using any type of transportation for themselves or their goods. It helped the VC raise money and control roads and waterways.

Plantation Tax: This tax was extorted from plantation owners, often at a rate higher than the average farmer could afford to pay. It was principally used to gain capital.

Business and Income Taxes: These taxes covered that section of society not hit by the rural taxes, such as merchants and businessmen. However, everyone paid the income tax, regardless how many of the other type taxes they may have paid.

Import and Export Taxes: These taxes were levied on products transported between VC controlled and RVN controlled areas. Through these the VC tried to control commerce between the two. They included tax breaks for people importing materials needed by the VC and penalties for people exporting items that the RVN might have needed.

VC Collection Methods

Imposing taxes without a means to collect them is futile and discrediting. Just as the VC had developed a complicated system to levy taxes that did not rely on one source of revenue, so did they develop a collection system that included a myriad of techniques to ensure payment and preclude preemption. These methods included:

Overt collection. The VC tax collectors operated openly and enforced their regulations rigidly in areas they controlled. This openness not only facilitated collection operations, but also reinforced the concept of legitimacy of the VC in the minds of the people paying the tax.

Covert purchase, theft, and extortion. Where the VC did not have absolute control the tax collection agents operated less openly and relied more on force or the threat of force to collect the taxes. They were "...often accompanied by armed soldiers who insure that the tax is collected." 38

Tax collection points. These were used either overtly or covertly, depending on who controlled the area. However, in general:

VC tax collection points are usually located on main RVN lines of communications (LOC's) in areas where the terrain favors the security of the point. Escape routes are close by and the operation is highly portable; that is, they can move to another point on the LOC on short notice without missing traffic moving in either direction. The extortion parties consist of from ten to as high as fifty personnel and include a security force capable of covering the actual extortion by fire. 39

The VC operated a broad based, well developed, multifaceted, tax system that successfully integrated overt and covert collection procedures to gather the logistical and monetary support. The degree of success, and ease with which that success came, was dependent on the degree of access the collector had to the people and the VC's ability to enforce their collection system through political appeal, coercion, extortion, or confiscation. It is then reasonable to conclude that any system that eliminated or curtailed their access would have resulted in at least some loss of support.

The primary means CAP used to combat the VC tax system were organizational and presence. The CAP platoons were organized along the major lines of communications and were expected to keep their portion of the road clear. Their constant patrolling and presence helped deter the tax collectors from entering the villages and at a minimum forced them to operate covertly. This presence was not limited to only night patrols, but also included presence in the markets, hamlets, roads and generally every aspect of village life. Their omnipresence was rewarded with information from disgruntled villagers as well as the fruits of just being in the right place at the right time. Major Fabio Taglieri, a CAP squad leader from

January to June 1971, noted that he often received information from villagers on VC supply cache locations.

40 In The Village, West described an ambush in which the CAP platoon disrupted a VC collection effort. 41

Lieutenant Colonel David H. Wagner gave another example of the importance of being in the village to protect the people from the VC tax collectors. In 'A Handful of Marines,' Wagner told how a CAP platoon captured a VC tax collector based on information from a disgruntled villager.

42 These events were possible because the CAP was in the village, not merely passing through it.

G/S-4 SUMMARY

These few examples demonstrate that by denying the VC the freedom to operate overtly, CAP not only hampered the collection effort, but also discredited the VC claim of legitimacy. From the combination of these two factors, it can be concluded that CAP helped reduce the amount of support the VC received from the people. In Village at War, Trullinger who witnessed this phenomenon firsthand summed it up this way:

In My Thuy Phuong the establishment of C.A.P. (sic) and some Government security activities brought the death of two or three Front leaders. Police arrested and jailed for varying terms one or two other leaders, along with twenty or thirty Front supporters. In addition Government and American forces killed and captured five of the village's estimated twenty guerrillas, while causing a few pro-Front families, fearful of arrest and heightened danger, to begin withholding support from guerrilla operations. 43

Chapter III: Summary

CAP was a successful counter to the Maoist doctrine of mass support. CAP's success varied in degrees based on its level of acceptance. Even at its minimum level of acceptance, like that described by Major Edward Palm in his Marine Corps Gazette article "Tiger-Papa-Three," CAP adversely affected the Viet Cong's access to the people by its mere presence. CAP had a viable military presence at the village level that denied the Viet Cong the advantage of overt operation. This forced the Viet Cong to use clandestine tax collection and personnel procurement methods. As an intelligence collection method, the presence of CAP in the village allowed the CAP Marines to gain an appreciation for the terrain and the people of the village. The enhanced knowledge of the terrain allowed the CAP Marines to move more easily through the country side, thus avoiding possible ambush sites, discovering

infiltration routes, covering more area in less time, etc. The appreciation the Marines gained as to the people brought with it an insight into their routine. This familiarization of village routine, allowed the Marines to notice suspicious deviations of that routine that indicated something was awry.

The effects of CAP on the other end of the spectrum resulted in significant reductions, or it can be argued, elimination of the support to the Viet Cong. In its most successful cases, as in the case of the Binh Nghia, CAP developed a viable militia unit from a previously defunct organization, that was capable of providing security to the village. In these cases CAP successfully denied local Viet Cong units access to the people, while simultaneously providing a windfall human intelligence network at the grass roots level that enabled the government units to focus their efforts to intercept and destroy VC infiltrators.

The key to the success of the CAP units was adherence to the established counterinsurgency principle of the need for a tactically viable home defense force that protected the people from coercion and intimidation. Brigading allowed the almost immediate establishment of

such a force. The direct effect of brigading was the increase in training and leadership the Marines provided. A side effect, but one that was probably more important in the long run, was the combat support that accompanied the introduction of the Marines. With Marines in the village the surrounding Marine units naturally provided better support. This gave CAP access to the military infrastructure the militia would not have had otherwise. To the poor, neglected PF in Vietnam this meant not only M-16 rifles, but fire support, reaction forces and medical support when needed. This support was indispensable in giving the PF not only the means to fight, but the will.

Chapter III:--ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to determine if the Combined Action Program is a viable tactic for future counterinsurgency operations. The thesis addressed the political/military framework within which CAP needed to operate to be successful. This framework included:

- A responsive government willing to address the legitimate grievances of the people in order to eliminate the cause of the insurgency.

- An overall, united political/military grand strategy consistent with the United States' policies of respect for human rights and democratic reforms.

The thesis examined Maoist doctrine and determined that, of its three pillars, the most vulnerable was mass support. This thesis also determined that, if the support the people gave the insurgent was reduced, then there would be a impact on the insurgent army.

Chapter II narrated a history of CAP and identified five problems CAP suffered from in Vietnam. These included:

- A difference over strategy between Marine and Army commanders that prevented CAP from ever reaching its fullest potential.

- Competing demands for personnel that caused CAP to be continuously undermanned.

- Ill-defined command relationships that relied on cooperation and good will more than military structure.

- Logistical problems associated with being 'The Other War.'

- Cultural differences that led to misunderstandings and other complications that caused friction between the Marines and the Vietnamese.

Chapter II also identified were four positive effects CAP had in Vietnam. These included:

- An improvement in relationships between the Marines and the Vietnamese.

- A reduction in the amount of collateral damage caused by the Marines, and more importantly, an understanding of the effects of collateral damage on the Vietnamese.

- A sense of fulfillment and satisfaction among the Marines.

- The marked improvements in village/area security.

Chapter III analyzed the effects of CAP on the benefits of mass support as espoused in Maoist doctrine. This analysis determined that CAP demonstrated a counter-Maoist potential at the village level despite significant detractors. Those detractors included:

- extraordinary cultural differences
- a less than fully integrated COIN plan
- a lack of sustainment support (personnel and logistics)
- political infighting, parochialism, and corruption

CAP's success was based on a proven tenet: that local security forces designed to protect the people from the insurgent must be an integral part of any counterinsurgency effort. Mao highlighted the importance of low level security forces when he wrote about "...peace preservation corps, home grown contingents, and other reactionary local armed bands." 1 He stressed the importance of destroying these units when he wrote, "We should continue to annihilate such troops in large numbers." 2

CAP's designers also recognized the importance of local security forces to the overall counterinsurgency effort. CAP was merely the expedient used to transform previously poorly motivated and ineffective units into tactically proficient units capable of contributing to the counterinsurgency effort. The key to this successful transformation was the brigading of the local militia units and the Marine squads. The three most significant of the many far reaching effects of brigading were:

- Brigading increased security. Since there was no time to train the local security forces, CAP initially provided security and "on the job" training (OJT). A squad sized force allowed the Marines to rely on each other for

survival, while simultaneously bringing the PF up to standards. This also instantly increased the amount of protection offered to the village. As the combined unit continued to increase in tactical proficiency, its ability to protect the people also grew. This helped to reestablish the government's primacy and developed an environment conducive to reform. This, however, is where CAP stopped. It was not a panacea that was capable of eliminating the insurgency. It was a security system capable of creating an environment in which a responsive government could address the legitimate grievances of the people.

- By brigading, the Marines were introduced into the center of the Vietnamese rural society, the village. Being in the village and working so closely with the villagers gave the Marines access to intelligence sources at the grass roots level not available to transient units. These sources enabled the Marines to focus their activities in the village and provided a potential (although often untapped) intelligence windfall. The intelligence the Marines received helped not only give early warning, but also resulted in an erosion of the Viet Cong infrastructure. This erosion came in the form of ambushed

tax collectors, confiscated caches, reductions in coercion, denial of overt recruiting, etc. All of these helped diminish VC influence and credibility.

- A third significant result of brigading was that it forced integration between the regular and militia units. While the need for such an effort was understood and talked to at the highest levels of the government, in reality it rarely existed. Brigading put Marines with the militia. With the Marines came ties back to the military infrastructure of the United States. To the PF this meant support heretofore unavailable because of a lack of interest by the regulars. With the Marines came command interest and thus, de facto integration.

CAP and FM 100-20

FM 100-20, Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict, identifies four counterinsurgency functions and four counterinsurgency principles to eliminate, prevent and/or defeat an insurgency. The counterinsurgency functions are: security, neutralization, mobilization, and balanced development. The counterinsurgency principles are: unity of effort; maximum use of intelligence; minimum use of violence; and a responsive government.

Security is all activities to protect the populace from the insurgency and to provide a safe environment for national development. CAP provides security through a militarily competent force with sufficient strength to defend the village against a low level military threat and integration into the regular military infrastructure to ensure a reinforcement capability to defeat a larger threat.

Neutralization is the physical and psychological separation of the insurgents from the population. It includes all lawful activities to disrupt, disorganize, and defeat an insurgent organization--except those that degrade the government's legitimacy. CAP provides neutralization through presence and protection based on its military credibility. By its presence and protection, CAP forces the insurgent underground. This, at a minimum, causes a degradation in the insurgents ability to coerce or intimidate support from the population. CAP can significantly reduce the amount of influence the insurgent has over the population and curtail the population's support, willing or unwilling, to the insurgent.

Mobilization means organized manpower, resources and support for either the insurgent or the government. If successful, mobilization maximizes manpower and other resources available to the government while it minimizes those available to the insurgent. CAP can mobilize the people by establishing a secure environment in which they can support the government without fear of retaliation from the insurgent. Without fear of retaliation, the people may be mobilized to provide information on insurgent activities, participate in government development programs, and participate in their own defense by creating and supporting a motivated, trained, and competent militia.

Balanced Development is an attempt to achieve national goals through political, social, and economic programs. It satisfies legitimate grievances that the insurgents attempt to exploit. CAP does not provide balanced development. It can, however, provide a foundation upon which to build the social, political, and economic programs necessary to address the legitimate grievances of the people. Simply put, it can help buy the government the time needed to correct the problems that led to the insurgency in the first place.

Counterinsurgency Principles

Just as CAP can be the foundation of a balanced development program by responsive government, it can also be the foundation for a unified effort. Militarily, CAP serves as a stabilizing force that can provide the overall effort with timely, accurate HUMINT; secure the rear of larger units; secure lines of communications; and reduce the friction and fog of war that accompanies military operations. Politically, CAP secures an environment in which a responsive government can establish and/or assert its legitimacy through programs designed to create balanced development. CAP can provide the security that is indispensable for economic growth and social progress.

CAP contributes to the unity of the counterinsurgency effort and is simultaneously dependent on it. The lack of a unified effort or a responsive government would be devastating to CAP. CAP must be part of a unified effort by a responsive government committed to addressing the legitimate grievances of the people. If this is absent, any success of CAP would be short term at best. CAP in Vietnam highlights the importance of these two principles. Although CAP was extremely successful in

providing security, neutralization, and mobilization, the lack of unity of effort and the unresponsive RVN government failed to provide the balanced development needed to eradicate the cause of the insurgency. As a result, CAP's successes were doomed to ultimate failure.

CAP can be instrumental in the application of the counterinsurgency principles of maximum use of intelligence and minimum use of violence. As discussed in Chapters II and III, CAP has excellent intelligence collection potential and can significantly reduce collateral damage. Through its intelligence collection ability CAP is able to reduce the size of the insurgent's pond and helps to focus the counterinsurgency effort. By minimizing collateral damage CAP can increase mobilization, or at least prevent alienation of the neutrals.

The impact on the insurgency of CAP is potential. While such a program can provide villages in which government primacy is enforced, it is not capable of much more than that. However, the establishment of a stable environment on which to build is the foundation of the counterinsurgency effort. After that, it is up to the federal, state, provincial governments. In Vietnam, as in other countries, this was the weak link. However, the

failure of the central government to enact required reforms does not invalidate successful lower level procedures such as CAP. In short, the low level brigading of regular forces with local militias is an excellent means to provide a secure foundation for a responsive government's efforts to eliminate the social, political, and economic conditions that led to the insurrection. Thus, CAP is in concert with current counterinsurgency doctrine as written in FM 100-20

The Future

CAP's potential as part of future counterinsurgency operations will be discussed in four parts:

- Conditions for use
- Applicability to future United States counterinsurgency efforts
- Applicability to other nation's counterinsurgency efforts
- Training requirements for such a program.

Conditions for Use

As with any other tactic, it is important to know when to use CAP and when not to. CAP should be considered when fighting a Maoist style rural insurgency in which the local militia units are incapable of providing sufficient security for balanced development. 3 Such a program should be part of a unified effort to stabilize the situation to allow government action to eradicate the causes of the insurgency. CAP requires regular government forces be properly disciplined, supported, and resourced.

Political Conditions

The conduct of the individual soldier in CAP develops the greatest significance. Since his conduct becomes the peoples' foremost impression of government intentions, it must be impeccable. This is a matter of professionalism and discipline. The individual soldier must have rules that guide his conduct, be aware of them, and have the professionalism to live up to them. If he fails to do so, the system must include a policy of swift, public disciplinary procedures to convince the people that his misconduct was an aberration of government policy that will not be tolerated.

A government must hold military personnel accountable for their actions. It cannot afford to merely pay lip service to equality under the law. All military personnel, regardless of rank or background, must be subject to the law. This one condition, more than any other, may cause many countries to balk at the idea of using CAP. In Vietnam, the Marines brought with them their innate sense of proper conduct. As a result the few incidents of misconduct by the CAP Marines were an exception rather than a rule.

In many countries undergoing insurgencies, however, this is not the case, nor was it the case with the PFs before the Marines arrived. In many developing countries the police and the military, especially the junior enlisted, are poorly paid and graft, or even extortion, is accepted as a salary supplement. Such conduct would doom CAP. CAP must draw all its sustainment independent of the location it is protecting. Each member of the CAP has to realize that it is not alright to take someone's chicken for dinner, or to abuse someone's children, or to supplement his income by a percentage of the profits of the local store. Such conduct makes the soldier a liability to the community, not an asset.

Creating an attitude supportive of CAP within the armed forces of a country cannot be accomplished overnight. It may require changing accepted practises that are hundreds of years old. Nevertheless, change is imperative if CAP is to be successful. This is not to say that CAP should be burdened with a red tape. A simple, easily understood code of conduct is needed, not a lot of bureaucratic nonsense that is beyond the ability of the soldier to understand. Mao wrote an excellent starting point for such a code:

The Three Main Rules of Discipline are as follows:

- (1) Obey orders in all your actions.
- (2) Do not take a single piece of thread from the masses.
- (3) Turn in everything captured.

The Eight Points for Attention are as follows:

- (1) Speak politely.
- (2) Pay fairly for what you buy.
- (3) Return everything you borrow.
- (4) Pay for anything you damage.
- (5) Do not hit or swear at people.
- (6) Do not damage crops
- (7) Do not take liberties with women.
- (8) Do not ill-treat captives. 5

CAP must also be properly supported, if it is to succeed. It requires political, social, economic, and military support. As previously mentioned any future CAP should be part of a unified effort by the government to address the legitimate political, economical, and social

grievances of the people. Only this type of effort will lead to the balanced development that will eradicate the source of the insurgency.

Military Conditions

CAP cannot stand by itself militarily any more than it can provide balanced development. CAP can provide security for a location while training the local militia to do it themselves. It cannot defeat the insurgent army. In fact, it is extremely vulnerable to attack by large enemy forces unless supported by regular forces capable of, and willing to, react. Therefore, similar to the overall effort, the military effort must be unified and integrated. For CAP this means protection from large enemy formations while it handles the low level threat. There can be no shortcuts in the development of such a program. It has to be realized from the start that CAP is a slow working, long term investment of personnel and resources.

The military effort must include a means for the small, separated CAP unit to tap into the country's military infrastructure. If such a unit cannot access the medical, logistical, personnel, and fire support it needs when it needs it, as well as be guaranteed reaction forces

to come to its assistance against large units, it is relegated to the position of what Mao called an isolated post, and can easily be destroyed. One of the two pillars of CAP in Vietnam was its ability to tap into the massive, overpowering American war machine. Without a similar ability, any future CAP is a target that the insurgent can pick off at his leisure.

CAP must be logistically self-sufficient. It should not require anything from the village. The program should not draw on the people it is protecting for routine logistical support such as food, billeting, building materials, or transportation. If it does so at the expense of the villager, it becomes a burden on the society and the troops become an occupation, rather than protection, force.

CAP must have competent lower level leadership. This means honest, able small unit leaders, capable of independent operations with only a minimum of guidance and supervision. Because of the geographical dispersion, the professionalism of these small unit leaders is absolutely indispensable. This requirement may very well prevent many developing countries from ever instituting CAP.

Future American Use

A future CAP that includes US troops at the village level, without the backup of American forces, should not be considered as an addition to current US doctrine. One of the two principle elements that led to CAP's success in Vietnam was its backing by the American war machine. This gave the program the punch it needed to deter attack from major enemy units or to defeat those that did attack. Without this reliable American support, a squad sized American force would be too vulnerable. Not only would this be unacceptable from a US public opinion standpoint, but would be morally unconscionable. The recommendation of this thesis is: Add CAP to current US doctrine, but with two caveats. 5

- First, CAP should be considered upon a major US troop commitment against a Maoist style, rural insurgency, if the local militia forces are unable to perform their mission.

- Second, when established, CAP must be integrated into a unified military effort. The proper integration of CAP will ensure that the maximum benefit is drawn from it and the maximum protection given to it.

While United States troops should not be assigned a CAP mission without American backup, CAP does have a future in Foreign Internal Defence and Security Assistance. CAP should be added to current doctrine as a tactic to help the host nation provide for the security, neutralization, and mobilization of its people. American Officers involved in advisory capacities should be taught the benefits of CAP. These officers should know how to set up such a program and how to supervise its employment using host nation forces and resources. They must fully understand its capabilities and limitations. They should see it as a tactic that cannot stand alone, but will, if properly supported, significantly augment the overall counterinsurgency effort.

Foreign Application of CAP

Foreign countries undergoing insurgencies should consider using CAP in contested areas to establish and enforce governmental primacy. CAP offers a potential that could help the government establish an environment receptive to the balanced development needed to eradicate the causes of the insurgency. Additionally, if properly applied, CAP would be consistent with current US desires for Human Rights and could aid in gaining and maintaining US assistance.

There are pitfalls, however, for a foreign government considering such a program. 6 These pitfalls revolve around the nature of the nation's society and its ability to properly implement CAP. Because CAP was an American innovation, it was built on some innate American qualities that may be absent in another society. These include:

- A professional noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps that is able to act independently of direct supervision. While this has traditionally been a trademark of the United States military, it has not been many countries. Since CAP requires independent action at the small unit level, a country lacking a competent, professional corps of small unit leaders must either develop one (which is virtually impossible on short notice); substitute officers for NCOs (which drains the officer ranks); or not use CAP.

- A well developed military infrastructure that has the ability to react quickly and aggressively to guerrilla attacks on CAP units. CAP is vulnerable to attack by large guerrilla forces. The government must be able to minimize the impact of such attacks. One way to do this is with reaction forces able to rapidly reinforce or relieve beleaguered militia units. Another way to do this is with

fire support or tactical air support, or a combination of all three. The more developed the country's military, the more options the country will have. However, protecting CAP units from large enemy units is instrumental in developing a feeling of support within the militia units to stiffen their resolve.

- A military infrastructure must also be able to support its soldiers independent of the village. The CAP unit cannot become a burden to the villagers or the national forces will become an occupation force to be resisted, rather than a ally to be trusted.

- A military infrastructure of sufficient size and quality to properly source CAP without depleting itself into a state of ineffectiveness. While CAP can produce excellent results, it cannot stand alone. CAP must have the backing of a quality military organization that can defeat the insurgent's main forces. An organization cannot use all its best small unit leaders in CAP at the expense of the line units. If it does, the accompanying degradation may result in ineffective regular units. Conversely, an organization must ensure the use of quality personnel in CAP or risk the consequences of having tactically inept or corrupt personnel protecting the

people. The solution for situations where the government had limited quality assets is to start small and build up. CAP cannot be rushed.

- A disciplined soldier capable of understanding the nature of his role in the counterinsurgency and acting accordingly. In this environment, the individual soldier plays a pivotal role. As the emissary of the national government, any misconduct by the individual soldier is grounds for alienation of the populace and propaganda for the insurgent. An ill-disciplined soldier who brutalizes or victimizes the populace can single-handedly subvert an otherwise successful program.

- Finally, the political will to implement the reforms necessary to build on any success achieved. Without this, as in Vietnam, all else is futile.

Training Required

The training required of most American units suitable for CAP is minimal. A certain amount of cultural awareness training should be conducted, but this would vary with the country. In some countries, the cultural

differences with the US are minimal. In other countries, they are considerable and would require more extensive familiarization training. 7

Language training is also a desired ingredient and should be conducted. However, it is not a prerequisite. Communication is the prerequisite, and as in the CAPs of Vietnam, lack of linguistic ability can be overcome by men with the common bond of combat, dedicated to the same goal. In short, lack of language training should not be used as an excuse to fail to implement a CAP style program.

Training on Rules of Engagement (ROEs) enforcement should also be conducted, because there is often confusion over exactly what ROEs mean. This type of training should be designed to remove any misunderstanding as to the commander's intent in his ROEs.

Finally, depending on the unit, it may be necessary to conduct training on small unit tactics such as patrolling, immediate action drills, and tactical movement or individual training such as, marksmanship, calls for fire, individual movement techniques. These are skills, however, that should be resident in the type of units that would be employed in a CAP type role.

Training for personnel within their own country may differ. The need for cultural and language training might disappear. Then again, it might intensify because of traditional prejudices. In many cases, basic military skills training and training designed to build a professional corps of small unit leaders would become the priority. These skills are absolutely indispensable in the execution of a CAP style mission because of the level at which CAP was designed to fight.

In Closing

CAP is based on the benefits of brigading. A major benefit of brigading is that it almost forces a military unity of effort, if for no other reason than a commander of a regular unit is much more likely to support a home defense militia if some of his men are attached to it. Another benefit of brigading is the potential increase the number of effective units and thus, combat power. A third benefit of brigading is it increases the intelligence available to the government. All of these benefits serve to help curtail support to the insurgent. The curtailment of support to the insurgent negatively impacts on the insurgent's ability to continue to fight.

When properly implemented, CAP provides security, neutralization, and mobilization. When used in conjunction with other actions, CAP can provide a stable environment in which agencies capable of providing balanced development can operate in relative safety. While not a panacea, a CAP style program can significantly contribute to the overall successful counterinsurgency effort. Therefore, CAP is a viable tactic for future counterinsurgency operations.

CHAPTER IV: ENDNOTES

1 Mao Tse Tung, Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse Tung, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 318.

2 Ibid, 323.

3 I have specified CAP as a viable tactic in a rural insurgency and omitted any mention of a urban insurgency, because in this thesis I have concentrated on the rural, Maoist style insurgency. While I see a certain promise in an urban counterinsurgency role, I believe further study of a CAP style program's potential in that environment is required.

4 Mao, Selected Military Writings, 343. For the purposes of this thesis the first of Mao's 'Three Main Rules,' 'Obey orders in all your actions' should be construed to mean all lawful orders.

5 Throughout the remainder of this thesis 'CAP' will not necessarily refer to the program used in Vietnam, but to any future program in which regular and militia forces are 'brigaded' to provide security for an area.

6 For more detailed information on Home Defense Forces currently in use, see Major John F. Mulholland. 'Hearts and Minds, Teeth and Nails: The Role of Civilian Self-Defense in Counterinsurgency Strategy.' Master of Military Arts and Sciences Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1991.

7 In this section on training, I am outlining minimums. Obviously the more training, the better able a force will be to handle the challenges of CAP. If time is available, detailed training such as the British Army gives its soldiers deploying to Northern Ireland, would be desirable. The point I'm trying to make here is that CAP does not require specially trained troops. The CAP Marines in Vietnam were above average Marines on paper, but were not an elite, highly trained, counterinsurgency focused unit. They were Marines with a mission who used discipline, infantry skills, innate feelings of right and wrong, common sense, and a little 'Yankee ingenuity' to work wonders.

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